

# *Two Weeks in Pakistan*

*Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari*

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## FOREWORD

*Shaykh Abu Asim Badrul Islam*

I was blessed with the unique opportunity to spend the second half of December 2020 in the beautiful and spiritually uplifting environment of Jami'ah Dar al-'Uloom Karachi, in the constant company of 'ulama and awliya.

Amongst the countless bounties and blessings of Allah Most Gracious upon me, for which I can never be able to thank Him enough, is the opportunity that He had granted me from 2001 to 2003 to study at Jami'ah Dar al-'Uloom Karachi. I spent the final three years of my nine-year traditional *Dars-e-Nizami* course there. These three years were the 'seal of musk' (Qur'an, 83:26) of my nine-year voyage, which commenced in a village in Bangladesh, during the latter part of 1994. I learnt and experienced, within the four walls of Jami'ah Dar al-'Uloom Karachi's expansive compound, a tremendous amount.

During the seventeen years since my return from Jami'ah Dar al-'Uloom Karachi in late 2003, I have not been back to visit my alma mater and my beloved teachers. One of the reasons for this may have been the fact that, here in Britain, we have always enjoyed the unique privilege and blessing of seeing and meeting the life and soul of Jami'ah Dar al-'Uloom Karachi – our most beloved shaykhs (the 'Shaykhayn'), Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Rafi' Usmani and Shaykh al-Islam Mawlana Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah shower His infinite bounties upon them). They have been gracing the Muslims of Britain on an almost annual basis.



In recent years, however, due to a few reasons, which include the realisation that several of our beloved teachers have departed from this world or are in deteriorating health, and the desire to spend whatever little time possible in the blessed company of our master, Shaykh al-Islam Mawlana Muhammad Taqi Usmani, the yearning to return to my alma mater has intensified. This yearning was further fuelled by the repeated invitation from our honourable teacher, Shaykh Mufti ‘Abd al-Mannan (may Allah grant him the goodness of both worlds). To this end, I tried to visit during the summer of 2019, but, despite trying everything within my means, I was unable to. I then suddenly received an extended visa to visit and I immediately purchased air tickets for June 2020. The COVID-19 coronavirus global pandemic gripped the whole world and I had to postpone my travel plans until August 2020. Yet again, the pandemic did not allow this to happen. Eventually, just when I had completely despaired and was almost certain that this visit would not happen, Allah Most Gracious, who is the best of all planners, decreed that I travel for two weeks in the company of the honourable Shaykh Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari.

The two weeks that we spent together – fascinating accounts of which are contained in this travelogue – were absolutely amazing and no less than magical. During these two weeks, commencing from our 2am departure from home, we slept very little. The non-stop discussions in the car and the aeroplanes, the late night chats in our guest house rooms, the little disagreements over whether we should have a breakfast or lunch, or make a sacrifice, participation in the spiritually uplifting activities and being in the blessed companies of great ‘ulama and mashayikh together, and countless other memories shall remain with me forever.

Meeting my beloved teachers and old friends, after such a long time, and the warmth with which they received us, was an experience that I

shall never forget. As Shaykh Muhammad ibn Adam has, in his usual captivating style, described in this travelogue, the biggest highlight of our trip was the absolutely unique experience we had with our beloved master, Shaykh al-Islam Mawlana Muhammad Taqi Usmani, and the life that it has instilled in my spiritually dead and soiled heart. Only Allah Most High can reward him in a way befitting His majesty and his noble character. As has been my habit for the last several years, I shall continue to pray for our master every day.

As with his previous travelogues, Shaykh Muhammad ibn Adam takes the reader with him on the journey, intriguing and fascinating him at every step. With his sharp attention to the minutest of detail, Shaykh Muhammad provides a very detailed and insightful account of our travels. May Allah Most Gracious reward him abundantly in this world and the next.

Abu Asim Badrul Islam

Northampton

ENGLAND

18 Rajab 1442/02 March 2021

## INTRODUCTION

Recently, me and my colleague and travel companion, Shaykh Abu ‘Āsim Badr al-Islam, returned home safely, after spending two magical and spiritually uplifting weeks in Pakistan. We spent the majority of our time at the world-renowned and prestigious seat of Islamic learning, Jāmi‘ah Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, in the company of our beloved shaykh and mentor, Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him), other shuyukh and students of knowledge (*tullab al-‘ilm*). We also briefly visited the cities of Lahore and Multan, in the province of Punjab.

I studied at the aforementioned Dār al-‘Ulūm around 1998/1999, partaking in the *fiqh* and *fatwa* specialization programme (*takhassus fi ‘l-fiqhwa ‘l-iftā*). Our class was fortunate to have studied under Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani and other esteemed shuyukh. I then revisited Karachi, and the Dār al-‘Ulūm, in 2001. As such, it had been 19 years since my last visit to Karachi, although it felt like only a few years had passed! My colleague, Shaykh Badr al-Islam, was visiting after 17 years, having graduated from the ‘ālimiyya programme in 2003.

The primary purpose of this current visit was to stay in the company of Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). During the trip, a student asked me the reasoning behind my visit. I replied, “95% in order to be in the company of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, 3% to visit Dār al-‘Ulūm and 2% to tour Pakistan.” This probably also explains the reason why it took me 19 years to return. The respected shaykh is a regular visitor to the UK, sometimes visiting

two or three times within a year. Muslims of the UK have been spoiled with his frequent visits during the last few years. On a personal level, along with seeing him during his UK visits, I have been fortunate to accompany him in his visits to countries such as Denmark, Bosnia, Uzbekistan, Malta, Cyprus and the Netherlands. In fact, since 2012, there has never been a gap of one entire year without me seeing him – I last saw him during our visit to the Netherlands in January 2020. Due to the corona virus pandemic, as with everyone else, the shaykh's travels came to a halt. It was nearing one full year without me being in his company, and, thus, I could not endure an entire year passing by. The desire and urge to be in his company became intense, and, thus, I finally decided to visit Pakistan.

Moreover, prior to the pandemic, it was virtually impossible for the respected shaykh to be continuously present at the Dār al-‘Ulūm in Karachi, due to his frequent travels. It was quite possible to make a trip all the way to Pakistan and discover that he has travelled abroad, or, at least, not present at the Dār al-‘Ulūm continuously. Due to the current pandemic, however, he was continually present throughout our two-week stay, *Al-ḥamdulillah*.

In the next few pages, I have endeavoured to share some aspects of this special trip – which included visits to various Islamic seminaries and the blessed company of great scholars (‘ulamā) and shuyūkh. The majority of the discussion surrounds Jāmi‘ah Dār al-‘Ulūm in Karachi and our beloved and honourable shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). I have relied on my notes, recordings and memory in capturing the teachings of the respected shaykh and other scholars, and tried my utmost to be as accurate as possible. It is, nonetheless, a human endeavour. Therefore, if a mistake or inaccuracy is detected, rather than attributing it to them, I request the readers to attribute it to me. I pray Allah Most High forgives my shortcomings,

accept this humble effort and make it beneficial for the readers, in particular students of sacred knowledge (*tullab al-‘ilm*). *Āmīn*.

Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari

Leicester, UK

24 Rajab 1442/08 March 2021

## PRESENCE OF THE SHAYKHAYN

We reached Karachi at around 1am on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2020. Upon reaching the Dār al-‘Ulūm premises, we made our way to the guesthouse where we were scheduled to stay for the next two weeks. (Incidentally, our stay at the guesthouse was pre-booked. The Dār al-‘Ulūm does not allow every visitor to reside at the guesthouse, and, thus, permission must be sought beforehand from the relevant personnel). At *fajr* prayers, it was an absolute honour and joy to greet the two shaykhs of Dār al-‘Ulūm, known within as “shaykhayn” (the two shaykhs) – our masters, Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani and his elder brother, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Rafi‘ Usmani (may Allah protect both of them). In fact, it became our normal practice, throughout our stay, to accompany the shaykhayn (along with some students) after *fajr* and other prayers, and walk with them to the gates of their houses, *Al-ḥamdu lillah*.

Seeing the shaykhayn at prayer times, albeit with heavy security and bodyguards surrounding them, was one of the highlights of our two-week stay. They are the heart and soul of this magnificent institution. The students’ deep love and respect for them is visible through their daily interaction with them. Seeing them during prayers, and in and around the Dār al-‘Ulūm, gives comfort to the students, teachers, staff and those inside the Dār al-‘Ulūm, and uplifts their spirits. During our stay, I would always try to perform my prayers in close proximity to them – particularly, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, whom I would try and greet after prayer. Merely watching the shaykh pray,

recite his post-*salah* litanies (*adhkār*) and engage in supplication (*du‘ā*) resulted in invaluable lessons, *Al-hamdu lillah*. (More regarding both shaykhs will appear later, in sections specifically dedicated to them, in *shā Allah*).



## GARDEN OF BLISS: JĀMI'AH DĀR AL-'ULŪM KARACHI

Jāmi'ah Dār al-'Ulūm Karachi is not merely a religious seminary. Rather, spread over 73 acres of land, it is the world's largest, most advanced and multi-functional institution of Islamic learning, research and propagation (*da'wa*) that is fully independent and funded by public donations. It was founded in 1951 by the late Grand Mufti of Pakistan and author of many books, including the highly popular *Tafsīr Ma'ārif al-Qur'an*, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafī' (d. 1396/1976 - may Allah have mercy on him), soon after his migration to Pakistan from Deoband (India). Currently headed by his two sons, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Rafī' Usmani and Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect them both), it has developed into a large institution that provides services to the immediate community and the wider Muslim *Ummah* in several areas (this shall be discussed later). The Dār al-'Ulūm was initially established in an area called Nanakwara, within the city of Karachi, but then moved in 1957 to the current site in Korangi. At the time, Korangi was outside Karachi city.

Resembling a walled city, the vast Dār al-'Ulūm compound – consisting of two central gates on either side – houses a range of structures and facilities, such as the impressive grand mosque, beautifully constructed three-storey building for the *dars nizāmi* curriculum classrooms, a complex housing the final year hadith studies (*dawrat al-hadith*) auditorium, three-storey Qur'an studies building, a building providing *dars nizāmi* facilities for females, a boys school, girls school, the



impressive Dār al-iftā' complex, huge three-storey library, multiple four-storey student hostel buildings, administrative offices, bookstores, eateries and shops, two cemeteries, residence for staff and their families, huge dining halls, guesthouse, bank, medical clinic, post office, playing fields, and a park for ladies and children. It is not simply a madrasa – rather, a self-sufficient village.

The *dars nizāmi* and Qur'an studies buildings have been beautifully and thoughtfully erected, comprising a central grassed courtyard with classrooms encircled around it on three floors. A staircase, as well as an elevator, can be used to reach the upper floors. The final year hadith studies auditorium is also unique for a traditional madrasa. With tiered seating arrangement – each row slightly raised above the one before it – all the students are able to comfortably see the teacher, and they have microphones attached to their desks. The teacher's desk and seat are located on the stage at the front, giving him a clear view of all the students. When a student speaks on his desk microphone, a horizontal light is lit up at the front of his desk. This allows the teacher to easily see who, from amongst the sea of faces in front of him, is speaking or reading.

Approximately ten thousand students currently study at the Dār al-ʿUlūm in its various departments, with approximately 500 in the final year hadith studies class. Tens of thousands, from all over Pakistan and various parts of the world, have already graduated and are serving the *Dīn* in their respective countries. Many students from India, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the countries of Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, the countries of Europe, North America, Africa and Arab countries have studied here over the years.

Students use cars, motorbikes and bicycles in order to move around the Dār al-ʿUlūm compound. The majority of the teachers and staff live in the houses located within the compound. There is noticeable and heavy

security in and around the Dār al-‘Ulūm, which is unsurprising, given the many attacks on religious institutions and ‘ulamā in Pakistan, over the last few decades. Security personnel are constantly guarding the two main gates, as well as other areas within the compound such as the entrances to classrooms and hostels. It was pleasing to see heavy security outside the residences of Mufti Muhammad Rafī‘ Usmani, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani and other teachers (may Allah protect all of them). For a more in-depth and panoramic view of the Dār al-‘Ulūm, see its [official website](#). There are also a few documentaries in Urdu on YouTube.

As mentioned, we reached at around 1am, but despite being the middle of the night, we could not resist taking a quick stroll outside. After placing our luggage in the guesthouse, we went for a quick walkabout. In spite of a lot of changes made to the current layout and vast development, memories of our student days came flooding back. It was great to be back at a place where we had spent a portion of our student lives, learning from some of the greatest scholars and masters of our time. Our nostalgic walk around the Dār al-‘Ulūm compound came to an abrupt end, when a security guard came up to us and advised that wandering around at that time of the night was not allowed. Accordingly, we returned to the guesthouse, unpacked our luggage and tried to sleep for the three hours that now remained until *fajr* prayers.

During the next couple of weeks, I often strolled along the beautiful, clean and wide roads within the Dār al-‘Ulūm compound. Lit with beautiful palm trees and striking greenery, many roads and pathways are named after the companions (*sahaba*) and some of the greatest Indian subcontinent scholars of the recent past. The road comprising the Qur’an studies building is named after the companion Sayyiduna ‘Ubayy ibn Ka’b (may Allah be pleased with him), regarding whom the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “The best

reciter of the Book of Allah is ‘Ubayy ibn Ka’b” (*Musnad Ahmad*). As for the road on which lie the hadith studies auditoriums, it is named after the companion Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him), who is regarded as the most prolific hadith narrator. Other pathways are named after personalities such as Haji Imdād Allah (d. 1317/1899), Shaykh Rashīd Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1323/1905), Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawi (d. 1362/1943), Imam Anwar Shāh Kashmīri (d. 1352/1933), Shaykh al-Hind Mawlana Maḥmūd al-Hasan (d. 1339/1920) and Shaykh Mawlana Muhammad Qāsim Nānotawi (d. 1297/1879) –may Allah have mercy on all of them.

The various student hostels are named after the four rightly-guided caliphs: Dār al-Siddīq, Dār al-Farūq, Dār ‘Uthman and Dār ‘Ali, as well as Dār al-Hasanayn (may Allah be pleased with them). Entrance and exit doors to these hostels are named after imams of creed and theology (*‘aqida*) such as Imam Abu ‘l-Hasan al-Ash’ari (d. 324/936), imams of *fiqh*/jurists (*fuqaha*) such as Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 150/767) and imams of spirituality (*tasawwuf/tazkiya*) such as Shaykh Bahā al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389) and Shaykh Mu’īn al-Dīn Chishti (d. 633/1236). The building comprising the final year hadith studies auditorium has doors named after some of our greatest hadith scholars such as Imam Bukhari (d. 256/834), Imam Muslim (d. 261/839) and Imam Nasa’i (d. 303/915) - may Allah have mercy on all of them. It seems the message being imparted is that this is a place where creed (*‘aqida/iman*), jurisprudence (*fiqh/Islam*) and spirituality (*tazkiya/ihsan*) are all taught side-by-side, in compliance with the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunna.

The student canteens/dining halls are also worth a visit. My travel companion, Shaykh Badr al-Islam, suggested we visit them during dinner and experience first-hand how students take their meals. Currently, there are four large dining halls, each accommodating 1500 students at once. It was great to see students all sitting at their dinner

tables and benches, talking amongst themselves and enjoying their modest food. They appeared to be enjoying a life of serenity and tranquillity, without any worry or concern about the outside world. May Allah bless them, grant them beneficial knowledge and enable them to serve the *umma* with sincerity and truth. *Āmīn*.

During our two-week stay, we developed an affinity and friendship with some of the students – especially, those in the *dawrat al-hadith* and *fiqh* and *fatwa* specialization (*takhassus*) classes. I cannot remember all of their names, but those who currently come to mind are brothers Tayyib Kashmīri, ‘Asim from Peshawar, Anas, Gulab Khan, Ammar, Fa’iq from Islamabad and Anwar from Kyrgyzstan. It was also a pleasure meeting some students from the West (UK and North America), such as brother ‘Umar Ansari from Michigan, whom I had previously met in Chicago, and the son of my dear friend, Shaykh Ahmad Ali from Bradford, UK. A few of them would greet me after every prayer, talk to me and express much love and affection. They also kept insisting on having a meal or tea together, and, thus, some of them visited us at the guesthouse one evening after ‘*isha*’ prayer and sat with us till late night, engaging in light-hearted discussions. On the day of our departure, they treated us to tea and snacks. May Allah bless them and grant them the good of this life and the hereafter. *Āmīn*.

Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi is a unique place of peace and tranquillity, and a spiritual sanctuary where one can easily forget the outside world. The feeling experienced is close to that felt in the two Sacred Sanctuaries (*Haramayn*) of Makka and Madina. The roads and streets outside Dār al-‘Ulūm appear to be unkempt, dusty, polluted, and busy with traffic and people going about their day-to-day lives. However, once a person enters the Dār al-‘Ulūm, the atmosphere is completely transformed. It is as though one is not even in Karachi or Pakistan! I felt as though I was spending two weeks in a garden of bliss, wherein the names of Allah

Most High and His Beloved Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) are proclaimed throughout the days and nights. May Allah Most High preserve this magnificent institution and those great souls from whom it takes its magnificence, and may He reward and bless the soul of its founder, the teacher of our teachers, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi'. *Āmīn*.

















### *The Grand Mosque*

The grand mosque, situated in the centre of the Dār al-‘Ulūm compound, is one of Pakistan’s most beautiful and largest mosques. During my student days, a much smaller mosque stood here, comprising a big ablution (*wuḍū’*) pool in the courtyard. I heard much about this newly-constructed mosque and saw its images, but witnessing it in the flesh and praying inside it was an entirely different experience. The new mosque, with marble flooring, is seven times larger than the old one, and can cater for approximately thirty thousand worshippers at any given time!

The main door of the mosque is called Bab al-Shaḥīḥ, named after Mufti Muhammad Shaḥīḥ (may Allah have mercy on him). Other doors are named after the female companions, Sayyida ‘A’isha and Sayyida Fatima (may Allah be pleased with them both), as well as recent luminaries of the Indian subcontinent, such as Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-Hayy ‘Ārifī (d.

1406/1986 - the spiritual mentor of both Mufti Muhammad Rafīʿ Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, who served as president of the Dār al-ʿUlūm for ten years after the passing of Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿ, Shaykh Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (d. 1369/1949 - author of the famous *Tafsīr ʿUthmani* and *Fath al-Mulhim bi Sharh Sahih al-Imam Muslim*, who played a major role in the foundation of Pakistan, and was a teacher and cousin of Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿ), Mawlana Muhammad Yāsīn Deobandi (d. 1356/1936 - father of Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿ and one of the earliest teachers of Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband, teaching for approximately 40 years), Shaykh Mawlana Sayyid Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madani (d. 1377/1957 - a renowned teacher of Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband and stalwart of India's freedom struggle), Mawlana Nūr Ahmad (d. 1407/1987 - the son-in-law of Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿ who assisted him in establishing the Dār al-ʿUlūm, there will be more regarding him later) and Shaykh al-Hadith Mawlana Saḥbān Maḥmūd (d. 1419/1999 - the former lecturer of *Sahih al-Bukhari* at the Dār al-ʿUlūm, whom I saw during my student days, and who was the teacher of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani). May Allah have mercy on them all. *Āmīn*.

The 260-foot-tall minaret is designed in the same style of the minarets of the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) Mosque in Madina, albeit shorter in height. It can be seen from a distance in the Karachi skyline - especially, when lit up during the night. It has somewhat become an external symbol of this magnificent institution.

Performing our daily prayers in the grand mosque throughout our stay was a thoroughly spiritually uplifting experience. I miss hearing the beautiful *adhan*, called out over the loudspeaker by the *mu'addhin*, resembling that of the Sacred Mosque (Haram) in Makka al-Mukarrama. Listening to the imam's recitation, especially during *fajr* and *'isha* prayers, was very soothing, serene and tranquil. It was - at least, for me - one of the closest experiences to praying in the two Sacred Mosques

(Haramayn). May Allah Most High protect the mosque and make it a means of radiance, worship, knowledge and spirituality until the end of time. *Āmīn*.









## ***Cemeteries***

We also visited the old cemetery located within the grounds of the Dār al-‘Ulūm. There is also a more recent cemetery within the compound. Visiting graves, in general, is not only permitted, but a Prophetic Sunna and means of reward. Allah’s Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “I used to forbid you from visiting graves. Do now visit them...” (*Sahih Muslim*), and “Visit graves, for, it reminds one of death” (*Muslim*). There are many reasons and benefits in visiting graves. For example: a) acting upon the Prophetic recommendation/*sunna*, b) it being a means of remembering death, the hereafter and the mortal reality of this life, and c) benefitting the inhabitant of the grave by way

of making *du‘ā* for them and reciting Qur’an. One may also intend – especially, when visiting graves of the righteous – benefitting from the blessings (*baraka*) granted by Allah to the grave of the deceased. Imam Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna is reported to have said, “Allah’s mercy descends when the righteous are mentioned” (*Kitāb al-Zuhd*). As such, if the mere mention of the righteous brings about the mercy of Allah, their actual presence in life or the place where they are buried would also, hopefully, result in Allah’s mercy.

Many great personalities, scholars and the pious (*awliyā*) are buried within the old Dār al-‘Ulūm cemetery, the most notable of them being Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘. Others include Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-Hayy ‘Ārifi, Shaykh al-Hadith Mawlana Sahbān Maḥmūd, Mawlana Nūr Ahmad (some brief details about them have been mentioned above), Shaykh Mawlana Shams al-Haq (former teacher of *Sunan Abi Dawud* at the Dār al-‘Ulūm, whom I saw during my student days, and who was the teacher of Mufti Muhammad Rafi‘ Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani), Mawlana Rashīd Ashraf Sayfi (d. 1440/2018 - the nephew of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani and compiler of the very popular *Dars Tirmidhi*), wife of Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘ (d. 1401/1981) and other members of his family (may Allah have mercy on their souls and reward all of them immensely for their services to the *Dīn*. *Āmīn*). Incidentally, the late brother Junayd Jamshed (d. 1438/2016) is buried in the Dār al-‘Ulūm’s new cemetery (may Allah have mercy on him).

I entered the cemetery and uttered a general *salām* in accordance with the *sunna* and made *du‘ā*, saying, “*assalāmu ‘alaykum, yā dār qawm mu’minīn, antum lanā salaf wa inna in shā Allah bikum lāhiqūn*” (Peace be upon the inhabitants of this abode from among the believers. You have gone ahead of us and we shall, Allah willing, join you). I then stood before the grave of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘ (may Allah have mercy on him), reciting *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* and other portions of the Qur’an,

and reflecting on the immense reward he must have earned for establishing this magnificent institution. He has long departed this temporary abode, but the Dār al-‘Ulūm he established in 1951 – first within the city of Karachi and then relocating to a remote, uninhabited area outside the city – has today become one of the greatest centres of Islamic learning. Allah willed that he be buried within the same Dār al-‘Ulūm compound – a place for which he sacrificed his day and night, and exerted so much of his blood and sweat. His legacy lives on – not just in the form of this magnificent institution, but also in the form of his great literary works, such as his widely acclaimed exegesis of the Holy Qur’an, entitled *Ma‘ārif al-Qur’an*, and his students – especially, his illustrious sons Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Rafi‘ Usmani, who are his worthy successors, as well as countless other services for Islam and the Muslims. May Allah Most High reward him in abundance and grant him a very high station (*maqām*) in the hereafter. *Āmīn*.

I also briefly stood and recited before the grave of his wife and other family members, and the graves of Dr. ‘Abd al-Hayy ‘Ārifī, Shaykh al-Hadith Mawlana Sahbān Maḥmūd and other great scholars and pious men and women of Allah buried in the cemetery. May Allah have mercy on their souls. *Āmīn*.



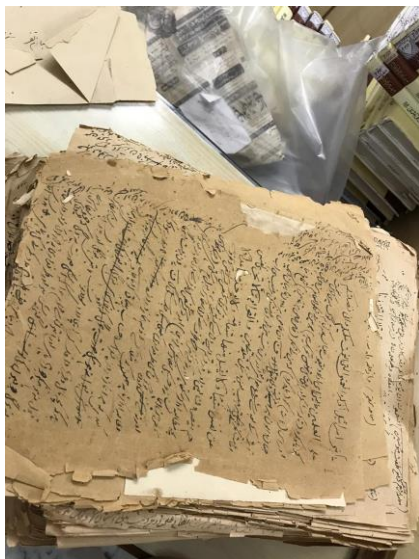




## Library

Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi’s library is one of the most distinguished and largest Islamic libraries of Pakistan, if not the world. It houses over 100,000 books in Arabic, Urdu, Persian and other languages, covering various Islamic and other disciplines. The personal library of Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ (may Allah have mercy on him) is contained within it, as well as all the books of Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawi, including their hand-written manuscripts. Other rare manuscripts are also preserved in the library. A unique cataloguing system has been designed and implemented, making it easy to search for books.

The library consists of three floors. The ground floor is where students and staff sit quietly and study, whilst the books are situated on the upper two floors. During my time studying at the Dār al-‘Ulūm, the Dār al-Iftā’ (Faculty of *Fatwa*) was located on the ground floor of this building. Hence, this is the place where I would spend most of my day. Memories of my *takhassus fi ‘l-iftā’* (*fatwa* specialization programme) days came flooding back. It was pleasing to once again breathe in the same place where I spent some wonderful and beneficial times. The current Dār al-Iftā’ has moved to a newly-built classy complex, details of which shall appear later *in shā Allah*.





## *Al-Balāgh Office*

The office of Dār al-‘Ulūm’ Karachi’s monthly journal, ‘Al-Balāgh’, is situated close to the library. The journal was initiated by Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ (may Allah have mercy on him) over 55 years ago. Since 1967, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him) has been its chief editor. He has also remained the chief editor of the English-language journal, ‘Al-Balāgh International’, since 1990. A third journal, ‘Al-Balāgh Arabic’, is also published.

Al-Balāgh is extremely popular – especially, its Urdu edition – amongst scholars, students of knowledge and the general public, throughout the world. People eagerly await its release every month, enjoying and benefitting from the variety of rich articles contained therein. Many books of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani were originally articles in Al-Balāgh, which were later published in book form. In the last few years, a series containing his autobiography entitled ‘Yaaden’ (Memories) has been published in monthly instalments. There is also a *fiqh* questions and answers section, currently managed by Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani’s youngest son, Mawlana Dr. Hassan Ashraf Usmani. A section is dedicated to news and activities relating to Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi.

I visited the Al-Balāgh office on a few occasions during our visit and met the staff – especially, my dear friend Mawlana Zakariyya Nu’māni. I have been in contact with him over the last couple of years, due to some of my articles being published in Al-Balāgh, upon the instruction of our shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). My travelogue on the visit to Uzbekistan in the company of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani was published in the English Al-Balāgh in approximately six or seven instalments. Thereafter, my English article titled ‘[Beneficial Points from the Trip with Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani to Malta and Cyprus](#)’ was translated into Urdu



by the English language professor at the Dār al-‘Ulūm, Mr. ‘Abd al-Qādir, and published in the Urdu edition. Currently, the Urdu translation of my article titled ‘[A Few Days in The Netherlands with Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani](#)’ is being published. May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contribute in any way to the publication of Al-Balāgh and reward them in abundance. *Āmīn*.



## ***Publishing Houses and Bookstores***

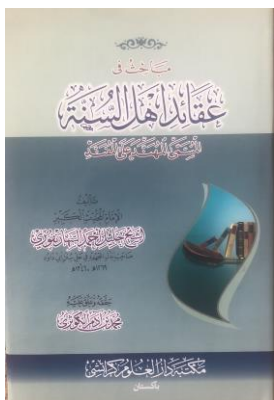
There are currently three bookstores located within the Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi premises. All three bookstores sell their own publications, as well as those published by other publishers.

1) Maktaba Dār al-‘Ulūm – the official publication wing of Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. Many beneficial books have been published by the Maktaba, such as the English translation of *Tafsīr Ma‘ārif al-Qur‘an*, *Imdād al-Fatāwa* by Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawi, *Jawāhir al-Fiqh* by Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘, *Nawādir al-Fiqh* by Mufti Muhammad Rafi‘ Usmani, *Legal Status of following a Madhhab (taqlīd)* by Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, and his famous *Dars Tirmidhi*, and many other books. I visited the Maktaba and purchased a couple of small booklets. It was pleasing to see that it has republished my edited version of *Al-Muhannad ala ‘l-Mufannad*, using the Dār al-Fath (Amman, Jordan) edition (with my prior permission).

2) Idārat al-Ma‘ārif, which has published many books over the years, such as Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani’s widely acclaimed English manual on Islamic finance, entitled *An Introduction to Islamic Finance*. Many books authored by Mufti Muhammad Rafi‘ Usmani, the owner of the publishing house, have also been published from here.

3) A relatively recent publishing house and bookstore is the Maktaba Ma‘ārif al-Qur‘an (Qur‘anic Studies Publishers). It specializes in publishing the works of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him), who is its owner. Recent masterpiece works of the shaykh, such as his Arabic *Fiqh al-Buyu‘*, translations of the Qur‘an in Urdu and English and *Fatāwa ‘Uthmani* have all been published in high quality from here. I spent a considerable amount of time here, looking through all the books and purchasing a few. My dear and beloved friend, Mawlana Shakir Jakhura (academic assistant of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, originally from South Africa) very kindly gifted me a few

books. These included Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani's catalogue of chains of hadith transmissions (*thabat*). May Allah reward him immensely for such priceless gifts. *Āmīn*. (Further details regarding Mawlana Shakir Jakhura shall appear later, *in shā Allah*.)



## ***Dār al-Iftā'***

The renowned Dār al-Iftā' (Faculty of *Fatwa*) of Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi is probably the world's most sophisticated and advanced fatwa centre. It is considered to be one of the most authoritative fatwa centres for many Muslims across the world – especially, those who follow the Hanafi School of Sunni Islamic Law.

Allah Most High granted the grand mufti, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafiʿ (may Allah have mercy on him) a very special status in *fiqh* and *fatwa*. He remained the head mufti at Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband (India) for many years. When he established Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi, he did not suffice on quenching the thirst of students by providing study facilities. Rather, he also established a Dār al-Iftā' to help Muslims find answers and solutions to their daily questions. Muslims across the world began sending questions, and the Dār al-Iftā' provided their detailed answers. His two sons, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Rafiʿ Usmani (may Allah protect them both), received extensive training from their respected father, and, thus, became authorities themselves. Other notable personalities and muftis who previously served at the Dār al-Iftā' include Shaykh Mufti ʿĀshiq Ilāhi Bulandshahri (d. 1423/2002 - a prolific writer of many works such as his voluminous commentary of the Qur'an and *Zād al-Tālibīn* (*Provision for the Seekers*)). He later migrated to Madina. Incidentally, I once accompanied Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, in Madina, to the residence of Shaykh ʿĀshiq Ilāhi. Upon arrival, he kissed the forehead of Shaykh ʿĀshiq Ilāhi, Shaykh Mufti Sābir Ali and Shaykh al-Hadith Mawlana Sahbān Maḥmūd (may Allah have mercy on them).

As mentioned above, during my student days, the Dār al-Iftā' was located beneath the library. It has now moved to a brand-new and impressive complex that has a professional layout and splendid outlook.



The faculty is considered an integral part of Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, where a number of competent and senior muftis, along with their junior colleagues, are engaged daily in issuing *fatwa* and research. These include my teachers, Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani, Shaykh Mufti ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Sakkharwi and Shaykh Mufti ‘Abd al-Mannan (may Allah protect them - more details regarding them shall appear later in *shā Allah*). Under their tutelage and guidance, students enrolled into the *fatwa* specialization programme (*takhassus fi ‘l-fiqh wa ‘l-fatwa*) also answer questions – thereby, receiving practical training. Over the years, many have graduated from the Dār al-Iftā’ and gone onto become senior muftis themselves in various parts of the world.

Questions are received via phone calls, postal letters, emails, telefax and personal meetings. The more simple questions are answered by first year students, while moderate ones are answered by second, and sometimes third, year students. The complex ones, however, are handed over to one of the muftis. If a question and its answer are such that even the senior muftis are not fully convinced, and they require further guidance, they are taken to Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him) for advice and final approval. No *fatwa* leaves the Dār al-Iftā’ without approval from one of the senior muftis. In my time, students answering questions required a minimum of two approvals with, at least, one from either Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani or Mufti ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Sakkharwi. I managed to answer many questions and had the honour of their approvals/signatures, *Al-ḥamdu lillah*. Understandably, most students desired the approval of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani; hence, they would try to answer difficult questions – thereby, having an excuse to go to him and receive his approval. I was no different, and, thus, managed to receive his signature on several answers (*fatāwa*), *Al-ḥamdu lillah*. To date, hundreds of thousands of *fatāwa* have been issued by the Dār al-Iftā’. A plaque on display shows the numbers of *fatāwa* written by senior muftis since its

inception. Copies of all *fatāwa* are securely preserved in archive files, known as *tabwīb al-fatāwa* (Index of *Fatawa*).

The current Dār al-Iftā' complex comprises three floors. The first two floors are reserved for the muftis, with separate modern office cubicles allocated to each mufti, allowing him to work without any disturbance. The top floor is for students undergoing *fatwa* training. They all have their personal seats at the desk, in separate rows, facing each other. Laptops have been provided for all the muftis and students, which contain electronic editions of all the important books to locate references quickly. They also use these personalised laptops to compose their *fatāwa*, which reflects the advancement and modernisation of the Dār al-Iftā'. During my student days there, we had to write our *fatāwa* and research with pen and paper. This meant that each draft had to be rewritten, every time the need arose. There is a state-of-the-art conference room on the top floor, where all the muftis meet and deliberate together, should there be a need. Students also occasionally assemble for important lessons and tutorials, using the projector and screen displayed on the wall. I was informed by some students that they were shown Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani's lessons on the principles of *fatwa* (*usūl al-iftā'*), which I had the honour of organising in the UK, and the recordings of which were uploaded on [YouTube](#). An observatory is located on the roof, from where moon-sighting is conducted every month.

It was an absolute honour to visit and tour the Dār al-Iftā'. A senior mufti, Shaykh Shah Tafaddhul Ali (whom my colleague Shaykh Badr al-Islam knew well), insisted that we have breakfast with him. He had initially invited us to dinner at his residence, but due to it being quite far from the Dār al-'Ulūm, it proved difficult for us. Therefore, in the end, we reached a compromise on having a late breakfast together in his office cubicle at the Dār al-Iftā'. Thereafter, he took us on a tour of

all three floors, observing students at work and meeting the muftis. It was great to meet some old friends from my student days, now serving as muftis, such as Shaykh Khalil Ahmad A'zami. We also briefly visited Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani in his Dār al-Iftā' office. He received us with warmth and gifted us copies of some of his books.

A longstanding distinctive feature of the Dār al-Iftā' has been research into matters of importance, often culminating in the publication of works. Designated teams of scholars and muftis are tasked with different research projects. Currently, there is an ongoing project to collate all the *fatāwa* penned by Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on him), and publish them in book form. It includes *fatāwa* he issued whilst a senior mufti at the Dār al-ʿUlūm in Deoband (India), as well as those at Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi. This project is being supervised directly by Mufti Muhammad Rafi' Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani. A committee comprising senior muftis – such as Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani, Mufti 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sakharwi and Mufti 'Abd al-Mannan – has been set up to oversee the project. A junior mufti, Shaykh Adnan Aziz, and his colleagues are tasked with working on the project. Four volumes, entitled *Imdād al-Muftīn Jāmi'*, have thus far been published in high quality print on glossy white paper. It is estimated that the work will be completed in approximately 16 volumes.

We sat with Shaykh Adnan Aziz, as he gave us an overview of the project. He mentioned that work commenced many years ago, upon the instruction of Mufti Muhammad Rafi' Usmani (may Allah protect him), who took the responsibility of obtaining the *fatāwa* of Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on him) from India. The *fatāwa*, obtained over a period of 3-4 years, were bound into approximately 18 archive files. He added that every *fatwa* is revisited by senior muftis of Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi, with editing, annotation and referencing (*takhrīj*). May

Allah Most High bring this work to a speedy completion and reward all those involved, and may the Dār al-Iftā' continue to serve the *umma* until the end of time with sincerity and acceptance. *Āmīn*.







## ***Hadith Encyclopaedia Department***

Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi established a hadith encyclopaedia (*mawsu’at al-hadith*) department some 19 years ago, upon the instruction, and under the supervision of, Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). This department has been working on a mammoth project to gather all the hadiths available, along with all their different chains of transmission (*turuq*), and creating a global reference system whereby each hadith has a specific number allocated to it. The intention is to make hadith referencing as easy as referencing Qur’anic verses.

In this regard, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah grant him wellbeing) invited a group of expert scholars in 2001 to discuss the project. Scholars such as the late Dr. Mustafa al-A’zami, Shaykh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradāwi, Dr. ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Bakr al-Qādi and the late Dr. ‘Abd al-Sattar Abu Ghudda assembled in the sacred city of Makka al-Mukarrama and exchanged ideas. It was decided that work should commence at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. For this purpose, a team of young, talented scholars (mostly graduates of the Dār al-‘Ulūm) was created, headed by Shaykh Mawlana Na’īm Ashraf. This team/committee of specialist researchers comprises 15 scholars, who work under the management of Shaykh Na’īm Ashraf. The entire project is directly supervised by Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, and no hadith is included without his verification. Thus far, four volumes of this unique work, entitled *Al-Mudawwanat al-Jāmi’ah l’il Ahādith al-Marwiyya an al-Nabi al-Karīm*, have been published by Dār al-Qalam and Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi jointly. Work on a further five volumes has been completed; these are currently being printed in Beirut.

We visited the department and witnessed, first-hand, the team of researchers engaged in their work. Mawlana Mahmud Hasan al-

Kumillayi (one of the researchers, whom we knew and who also invited us for dinner at his house - may Allah reward him) received us, showed us around and then took us to the office of Shaykh Na'im Ashraf (the project manager). Shaykh Na'im is the son of Mawlana Nūr Ahmad, who was described previously as the son-in-law of Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on them both) and assisted him in establishing the Dār al-ʿUlūm. Therefore, Shaykh Na'im is the nephew of Mufti Muhammad Rafi' Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect them both) - his mother being their elder sister and daughter of Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on him). We were informed that she is currently in her late nineties and lives with her other son in Karachi. She is a spiritual pupil of Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ʿAli Thānawi, having given the pledge (*bay'a*) of *tasawwuf/tazkiya* to him. This probably makes her the only surviving pupil of Hakīm al-Umma (may Allah have mercy on him). She also has the honour of listening to the entire Qur'an from Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Thānawi, as she would accompany her father in Ramadan to Thana Bhawan (India) and perform *tarāwih/qiyām* prayers behind him. I requested Shaykh Na'im Ashraf if a visit to his respected elderly mother could be arranged, but due to shortage of time, it unfortunately did not materialize.

Shaykh Na'im Ashraf then went on to discuss his father, Mawlana Nūr Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him). The respected Mawlana was of Burmese origin and he travelled to Deoband (India) to study at the famous Dār al-ʿUlūm. He built a special connection with Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on him) in Deoband, and then followed him in migrating to Pakistan. He assisted him in the beginning years of the establishment of Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi. During the latter part of his life, Mawlana Nūr Ahmad founded the famous Idārat al-Qur'an wa 'l-ʿUlūm al-Islamiyya publishing house, which, over the years, produced many beneficial and rare works. In the beginning, he



focussed on publishing the Noble Qur'an with close attention to accuracy and beautiful presentation. Thereafter, his publishing house produced works such as Imam Zafar Ahmad Uthmani's colossal encyclopaedic work, *I'lā al-Sunan*, in 20 volumes, Imam Ibn Abi Shayba's *Al-Musannaf*, Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan's pivotal works, *Al-Mabsut* (also known as *Kitab al-Asl*), *Al-Jami' al-Saghīr* and *Kitab al-Āthār*. They also published *Al-Muḥīt al-Burhāni* in twenty-five volumes – the first full and edited publication of this great work in the Hanafi School. After his passing in 1987, Shaykh Na'im Ashraf and his brother Shaykh Fahīm Ashraf continued their father's legacy of publishing rare and beneficial works from the Idārat al-Qur'an publishing house. May Allah reward Mawlana Nūr Ahmad and shower him with His mercy. *Āmīn*.

In explaining the hadith encyclopaedia project, Shaykh Na'im Ashraf mentioned that the work is in its final stages, as far as sourcing hadiths and creating a database is concerned. The hadiths were sourced from 80 primary sources, which cover 99 percent of hadiths available. Furthermore, to compensate for the remaining one percent and to ensure that no hadith is missed, another 2000 secondary sources are searched. This includes both published works, as well as manuscripts. The sourced data is then fed into their software. With such meticulous research, it is hoped that all available *marfu'* hadiths will have been sourced.

As for having the sourced hadith data published as a book, the comprehensive larger work (*Al-Mudawwanat al-Kubra*) – containing all the various chains (*туруq*) of all the hadiths, and their texts (*mutūn*) – will amount to approximately 100-150 volumes. This work is being prepared simultaneously, which may be published in the future, or made available in electronic format online. The current published four volumes are the intermediate compilation (*Al-Mudawwanat al-Wusta*), which is an abridged version of the first. In this compilation, the text of

the hadith with the most authentic chain from its various chains is chosen (*al-matn al-mukhtār*), as well as the one with the most comprehensive chain (*al-tarīq al-ajmaʿ*). Other variations of the hadith are not cited, unless there is some extra wording/benefit to be gained from doing so. It is anticipated that this work will be completed in 40-50 volumes. A third more condensed version (*Al-Mudawwanat al-Sughra*) is also being prepared, which suffices with the *al-matn al-mukhtār*, as well as any other variation containing extra benefit. This should be completed in about 10-12 volumes, and will be suitable for inclusion in the *dars nizāmi* curriculum.

Finally, in relation to creating a global reference system, Shaykh Naʿīm Ashraf remarked that we hope and pray Muslims the world over will embrace this endeavour and accept the universal hadith numbering contained within the work, although it could take many years. He added that if new editions of key hadith works, such as the six canonical collections (*al-kutub al-sittah*), include the project's universal referencing, it would help the cause. I pray that Allah Most High grant our beloved shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, a long and healthy life, so that he can see the fruits of this project and witness its completion. *Āmīn*.





## ***Hira Foundation School***

On the final day of our trip, I toured the Hira Foundation School with my dear friend and brother, ‘Abdullah Usmani. I met ‘Abdullah during our Uzbekistan trip in 2019, and it was once again a pleasure to meet him. He is the grandson of our respected shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, and the son of Dr. Mawlana Imran Ashraf Usmani. He is currently studying at the Dār al-‘Ulūm, as well as pursuing his secular studies. Despite being young, he seems mature, very well-mannered and intelligent, *mā shā Allah*.

Hira School is a division of Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi and located within its compound, with separate wings for boys and girls. Its official website mentions the following: “Hira Foundation School is an excellent Cambridge based schooling system, in which we stand committed to offer value based education with a goal to spruce our children in accordance with Islamic values. The journey of this institution was started in the month of October, 2004. Its first session was conducted in March, 2005, under the direct supervision of the top management of Jāmi‘ah Dār al-‘Ulūm... With the Grace of Almighty Allah, HFS has now moved to a larger newly-built premises equipped with all necessary facilities, and accommodates a larger number of students who are instructed by well qualified, professional, enthusiastic and devoted teachers with high quality of education system. HFS provides quality education under Islamic and very secured and peaceful environment which helps children to order their lives and their extra-curricular activities according to the teaching of Islam.”

The school explains its vision with the following: “From the very inception of Jāmi‘ah Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, its founder Grand Mufti of Pakistan Mawlana Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘ (may Allah have mercy on him) had the following vision: To facilitate students to become well-

educated, successful and practicing Muslims, for the pleasure of Almighty Allah.”

I first visited the boys’ campus, in the company of ‘Abdullah Usmani, which currently is undergoing renovation and expansion. A master plan on display shows the institute’s future aspirations, which would take it to another level and being one of the largest and distinguished schools in Pakistan. Thereafter, I visited the girls’ campus where I met Shaykh Dr. Imran Ashraf Usmani, the principal of the school. Dr. Imran is the son of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him) whom I have known well for a long time. He is tirelessly devoted to the Hira Foundation and spends much of his day managing its day-to-day activities. I was shown around the campus by his secretary, and was amazed to see many modern facilities on offer, such as a swimming pool and gym. Thereafter, over a cup of tea at his office, Dr. Imran explained his vision and future aspirations of the institute. He mentioned that boys and girls from across Karachi study at the school, despite being located outside the main city. The school has been well-received by the public due to its high achievement level. It gained the top level of accreditation by the British Council after a rigorous assessment, and was declared the International School Award Winner 2019-20. Dr. Imran also explained that one of the main aims of the institute is to bridge the gap between scholars (*‘ulamā*) and worldly sciences. As such, the Dār al-‘Ulūm students also benefit from some of the provisions offered by the institute, such as courses on English, Business Management, IT and Digital Marketing. The idea is for them to have knowledge of worldly sciences along with their religious education. I pray that Allah Most High grant Hira Foundation further success and bring the dream of Mufti Muhammad Shafi<sup>c</sup> (may Allah have mercy on him) to fruition. *Āmīn.*







## GRAND MUFTI OF PAKISTAN MUFTI MUHAMMAD RAFI<sup>ؔ</sup> USMANI

One of the highlights of our two-week visit was being in the company of the current grand mufti of Pakistan and rector of Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Rafi<sup>ؔ</sup> Usmani (may Allah grant him wellbeing). Fondly referred to as “Sadr sahib” (respected president/head) by students and staff of the Dār al-‘Ulūm, he is seen by many as the life and soul of this magnificent institution. Over the last few decades, he has overseen its growth and transformation into a world-renowned Islamic university. He is the longest serving president of the Dār al-‘Ulūm, assuming office in 1986 (34 years and counting) after the passing of Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-Hayy ‘Ārifī (may Allah have mercy on him). During this time, he dedicated his life to the Dār al-‘Ulūm cause; and in the words of his younger brother, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, “Every nook and cranny of Dār al-‘Ulūm bears witness to the exhaustive physical and mental energies he devoted to the construction and progress of Dār al-‘Ulūm. It would probably not be an exaggeration if I were to say that each and every building of Dār al-‘Ulūm, except one or two, was built under his direct supervision and he personally put in effort for each brick that was used [...]” (Mufti Taqi Usmani’s autobiography).

Along with his services towards the growth of the Dār al-‘Ulūm, he is a very proficient and successful long term teacher of hadith. His lectures on *Sahih Muslim*, spanning over 30 years, have been well-received by



students of knowledge, culminating in the publication of a two volume-work, entitled: *Dars Muslim*. Moreover, his other works in Arabic and Urdu are testament to his academic proficiency, such as his two-volume *Nawādir al-Fiqh* (collection of treatises on various *fiqh* subjects), *Dābit al-Mufattirat* (Arabic treatise on the principles of what invalidates the fast), *Hayāt Mufti A'zam* (biography of his father), *‘Alāmāt Qiyamat aur Nuzūl Masīh* (Signs Before the Day of Judgement and the Coming Down of Prophet ‘Isa) and *Kitābat Hadith* (history of hadith writing). His *fatāwa*, written throughout his life, are currently being compiled and published. Entitled *Fatāwa Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi (Imdād al-Sā’ilīn)*, a few volumes of this work have so far been published. May Allah enable its speedy completion. *Āmīn*.

During my time studying at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi in 1998/99, I did not officially study under him, as I did not undertake the final year hadith studies (*dawrat al-hadith*) at the Dār al-‘Ulūm (although, I unofficially attended Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani’s *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* lectures). As such, I did not study *Sahih Muslim* under Mufti Muhammad Rafī‘ Usmani, and neither did he teach the *fatwa* specialization programme (*takhassus*), at the time. As mentioned previously, *takhassus* students would have their written *fatāwa* verified by senior muftis such as Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani, Mufti ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Sakkharwi and, at times, Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, but not Mufti Muhammad Rafī‘ Usmani (may Allah protect them all). Despite this, he, out of his affection and kindness, instructed me to show him a couple of answers and have them verified/signed by him.

Unfortunately, I did not remain in contact with the respected shaykh, since leaving Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, as much as I ought to have done, although I did write a few letters and made a point of meeting him during all his UK visits. I remember him complaining about this during one of his visits, many years ago. Over the last few years, he visited our

house and/or madrasa and had lunch/dinner with us on multiple occasions. During his last visit to the UK, in August 2019, he honoured us with a visit and also accepted my invitation to have lunch with us. I showed him a *fiqh* answer (*fatwa*), which I had penned with his endorsement/signature in 1999, upon which he expressed happiness. He looked very weak and frail, during that visit, but still managed to tour multiple UK cities, delivering talks and conducting gatherings of advice.

As mentioned, we arrived at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi at around 1am and met the respected Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Rafī‘ Usmani at *fajr* prayers that (Friday) morning. He, in his usual affectionate way, greeted us with warmth and kindness, and enquired about the details of our journey and intended duration of our stay. It then became our customary practice to greet him after every *fajr salah*, and walk with him from the mosque to his house. We would occasionally meet him after *zuhr salah* too, after which he would sometimes sit in his office and meet visitors. Due to his frail old age and extreme weakness (he is 84), he would mostly offer his other prayers at home – although he would be escorted to the *dawrat al-hadith* auditorium at around 11am to teach hadith. On that Friday, he delivered the pre-*jumu’a* lecture in Urdu, followed by an eloquent Arabic sermon by Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect both) on the importance of *halal* earnings.

Despite his ill-health and weakness, he appeared to be alert, sharp and highly intelligent. On a couple of occasions, I was unable to greet him after *fajr*, so he asked my colleague about my whereabouts and wellbeing. It was amazing that he would ask minor details concerning our stay, despite his age, health condition and the sheer number of issues that must dominate his mind, ensuring that our stay at the Dār al-‘Ulūm was comfortable. This is the way of the pious servants of Allah,

in that their every action and statement is executed for His sake alone, and to please Him Most High.

The respected shaykh's son, Shaykh Dr. Zubayr Ashraf Usmani, invited us for lunch at their residence, one afternoon. Dr. Zubayr is a very intelligent, humble, gentle and well-mannered individual, whom I have known for many years. I would meet him frequently during our visit and engage in various conversations. Due to his father's old age, he has been tasked with many of his father's responsibilities. May Allah enable him to follow in his father's footsteps, grant him more *tawfiq* and accept him to serve the cause of the Dār al-ʿUlūm with sincerity and due diligence. *Āmīn*.

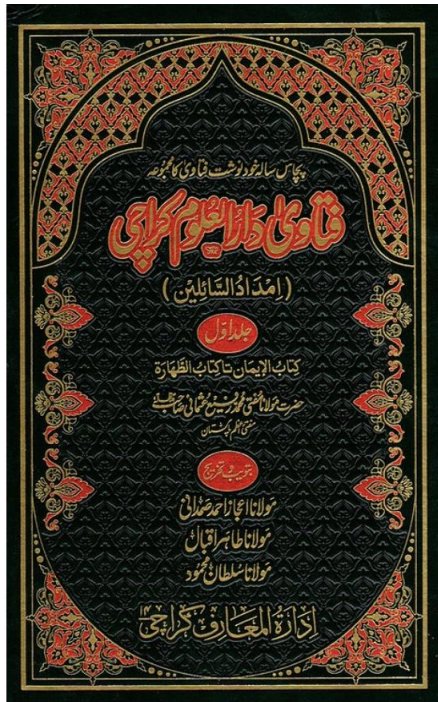
It was an absolute honour to have lunch in the company of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Rafīʿ Usmani and Dr. Zubayr Ashraf Usmani, at their residence. Mufti Muhammad Rafīʿ Usmani (may Allah protect him) spoke with us regarding various topics over lunch, such as the current corona virus pandemic and Israeli-Arab relations. I was surprised that he remembered my last visit, in 2001, in which I was accompanied by my family and had lunch at his house. I mentioned that my respected father (whom Mufti Muhammad Rafīʿ Usmani knows well) was born in 1937 and graduated from Dār al-ʿUlūm in Deoband (India). My respected father (may Allah grant him wellbeing) has related to me on numerous occasions that during his student days, Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿ (may Allah have mercy on him) visited Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband from Karachi, with his sons, and delivered an inspiring lecture on “defrauding” (*tatfīf*), as discussed in surah 83 of the Noble Qurʾan. My father transcribed the entire talk into his notebook. Mufti Muhammad Rafīʿ Usmani, in response, stated that he, too, was born in 1937, thus, being the same age as my father (84). He added that he was 22 when he accompanied his father (Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿ) to Deoband (India). His father, in fact, delivered two lectures at Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband; the first in the main

mosque on the topic of defrauding (which my father had transcribed), and another in the hadith lecture hall (*dār al-hadith*), where he taught for many years prior to his migration to Pakistan. He commenced this second lecture by saying, “I am not here today to discuss academic subtleties (*‘ilmi nikāt*). I made this mistake for many years sitting on this seat. Instead, I shall discuss the awareness and consciousness of Allah (*taqwā*) and acquiring good character-traits and dealings (*husn al-mu’āmalāt*).”

My colleague mentioned his recollection from his time studying *Sahih Muslim* under Mufti Muhammad Rafi<sup>c</sup> Usmani that the respected shaykh, after teaching them, would always walk around the Dār al-‘Ulūm compound. In response, the shaykh said, “Those were my younger days.” He added that he would take a daily stroll around the Dār al-‘Ulūm compound, multitasking and completing three tasks simultaneously: 1) reciting his daily *adhkār*, 2) inspecting development projects and checking on the various departments, and 3) exercising.

It was highly beneficial spending over an hour with the esteemed shaykh over lunch, which we shall remember for a long time. May Allah Most High grant him wellbeing, health, strength and goodness of both worlds, and may He allow us to benefit from his knowledge, wisdom and works. *Āmīn*.





## SHAYKH AL-ISLAM MUFTI MUHAMMAD TAQI USMANI

As mentioned in the beginning of this write-up, the primary objective of my visit to Pakistan was being in the company of my beloved teacher and mentor, Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah Most High protect him and grant him wellbeing. *Āmīn*). The respected shaykh needs no introduction; much has already been said and written about him. I cannot thank Allah Almighty enough for granting me various opportunities to be in his company, especially during the last few years, both in the UK and abroad. I last saw him in January 2020, during our three-day visit to the Netherlands, after which he visited the UK. Moments spent in the company of such esteemed personalities often teach a person much more than months and years of studying. It is a completely different matter, however, that I did not benefit from him as I ought to have, due to my shortcomings – may Allah forgive me. *Āmīn*.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the respected shaykh has not travelled abroad for a while; his last trip being to the sacred city of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) in February 2020. Throughout the entire duration of our stay, he remained at the Dār al-ʿUlūm. In fact, he made a light-hearted remark that he had become so accustomed to travelling that at times, in a state of residency at home, he would forgetfully make an intention of *qasr* (shortened/travel) prayers, but then realise he is not travelling. Now, he has become accustomed to staying at home. In any case, it was a great blessing to

spend some delightful moments in his company during our two-week visit; this includes greeting him after prayers and accompanying him to his house, attending his *Sahih al-Bukhari* lectures, spending time in his study during his office hours and, in particular, the evening dinners at his residence. For the sake of ease, I shall discuss the various interactions with the respected shaykh under relevant subheadings.

### ***Evening Dinners and Discussions***

One of the highlights of our visit to Karachi was having multiple dinners at the residence of our beloved and respected shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). During these dinners, we engaged in various beneficial and light-hearted conversations, and benefitted from his beautiful words of wisdom. These moments were absolutely priceless, for which I cannot thank Allah Most High enough. I am also thankful to the respected shaykh who, despite being extremely busy with his various activities, took time out for an insignificant person like me. This was a clear reflection of his greatness, compassion, kind-heartedness and beautiful character-traits inherited from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him)<sup>1</sup> – may Allah reward him immensely. *Āmīn*.

We were honoured to have dinner approximately 5/6 times at his residence. He would usually call me on my phone after *maghrib salah*, to invite us for dinner after *‘isha* (at about 9:15pm). Out of courtesy, he always asked whether I had other plans/invitations at that time, and stressed that I bring along my colleague. Much can be learnt from this, in relation to social etiquettes and manners. With a heavy heart, I was

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the beautiful character-traits of our beloved shaykh, see my article: ‘[Six Prophetic Character-traits of Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani \(hafizahullah\)](#)’



compelled to decline the invitation on two occasions: once, due to an already accepted dinner invitation elsewhere, and a stomach upset (details to follow) on another occasion. Upon the second or third invite, I implored the shaykh to not burden himself, but he – out of compassion and kindness – responded that there is no burden, adding that it is a good opportunity to spend some time together. In fact, after my return to the UK, I sent a message thanking him for his kindness, hospitality and giving us time despite his extremely busy schedule, adding: “merely seeing and greeting you after prayers would have been sufficient for me.” He responded by saying it was his pleasure to host us, and even apologized for not giving us enough time! All of this is clear illustration of our beloved shaykh’s noble and beautiful character, compassion, honouring of guests and other beautiful prophetic character-traits. It imparts invaluable lessons from which much can be learnt.

In any case, below are some points from the discussions and light-hearted conversations with the respected shaykh:

1) On the first evening of our visit (Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2020), he welcomed us with great warmth and spent a considerable amount of time speaking to us about various issues, before and during dinner. He asked which year we studied/graduated from the Dār al-‘Ulūm. I jokingly remarked that I was at the Dār al-‘Ulūm a few years prior to my colleague (1999 and 2003 respectively) and we are similar in age, but I look much younger than him. The respected shaykh agreed, saying, “You do look very young for your age” and then made a light-hearted comment on my short height and stature.

He added that his father, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘, was also short in height, such that his teacher Imam Anwar Shah Kashmīri (may Allah have mercy on them both) would affectionately call him “*Mulla Mukhtasar*” (‘*mukhtasar*’: brief – i.e. short *mulla*). He then said to me, “You are also *Mulla Mukhtasar*!” I remarked that many of our great

predecessors and jurists were short in height, including Sayyiduna ‘AbdAllah ibn Mas’ud (may Allah be pleased with him), arguably the greatest jurist amongst the companions. I then showed him a list of some great short personalities, which I had written on my phone, and he added the name of Sayyiduna ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him). It is worth noting that despite Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi<sup>c</sup> – called “*Mulla Mukhtasar*” by Imam Anwar Shah Kashmīri (may Allah have mercy on both) – and other great personalities being short in height (*qāma*), they were tall in value (*qīma*). However, in relation to me – called “*Mulla Mukhtasar*” by my respected and beloved shaykh – it would be short in height, as well as in value.

2) I highlighted to the respected shaykh an interesting point. I said that he was born in the year in which Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawi passed away (1943). Moreover, his birth and his father’s demise took place in the month of Shawwal (although, in different years). My intention was to allude to the fact that Allah’s way (*sunna*) is that when a great personality passes away, another is born. Imam Shāfi‘i was born in the year in which Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on them both) passed away (150 AH). As such, I felt it was significant that our respected shaykh was born just three months after the passing of Hakīm al-Umma Thānawi, and that his birth and his father’s demise took place in the month of Shawwal.

Upon hearing this, he smiled modestly and remarked that on 5<sup>th</sup> Shawwal in 1396AH/1976AD, he was sitting in his father’s room at night after ‘*isha* prayers, when he suddenly realized that it was his birthday. Thus, he mentioned it to his father. His father asked in an affectionate manner, “*Mā shā Allah*, how old are you now?” He replied, “I have completed 34 years”, upon which his father said, “All praise is for Allah that He has made you cross many hurdles [of life] at a young age.” Five

or six days after this incident, on 11<sup>th</sup> Shawwal, his father left this world (may Allah be pleased with him. *Āmīn*).

Our honourable shaykh then mentioned an incident that took place between him and his father, saying: “Many people are unaware of it” and “I do not feel comfortable saying it; in fact, I feel somewhat fearful.” The incident is as follows: His late father, during the last few years of his life, due to deteriorating health, conducted his spiritual discourses in his room, which were attended by many people. On one occasion, our honourable shaykh arrived late, due to attending to some important task. When he arrived, the entire room and beyond was already full with attendees. Therefore, he sat at the rear of the gathering, upon which his father gestured and instructed him to come forward and sit next to him on the bed. In adherence to his father’s command, he came forward and sat next to him. His father then stated that a similar incident had occurred between him and his shaykh, Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawī (may Allah have mercy on them both). Upon seeing him sit at the back of the gathering, Hakīm al-Umma gestured for him to come forward and sit next to him on an elevated position, which he did. Thereafter, he (Hakīm al-Umma) related a story in relation to Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb (two sons of the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahān). During their succession struggle, both, on separate occasions, visited a saintly man and asked him to supplicate for their victory and ascension to their father’s throne. On each occasion, the saintly man, out of respect for the prince, vacated his seat and asked the prince to sit on it. Dara Shikoh hesitated and remained seated on the floor, and when he asked the saintly man to supplicate for him, he said, “I asked you to sit on the throne, but you refused.” Aurangzeb, however, did not hesitate, and took his seat immediately. Thereafter, when he asked the saintly man to supplicate, he remarked, “The matter is resolved; you have already sat on the throne.”

Our beloved shaykh, predictably, did not comment further, but the significance of the entire above incident, according to my humble understanding, is that Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Thānawī was indicating that Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafiʿ (may Allah have mercy on them both) was his natural successor. Likewise, Mufti Muhammad Shafiʿ was indicating that his son, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, was his natural successor. For me, it only somewhat confirmed what I already believed in my heart – hence, my mentioning the fact that our shaykh’s birth occurred slightly after Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Thānawī’s death, and in the month of Shawwal. If, in the modern era, any chain can be described as the ‘golden chain’, it is that which began with Hujjat al-Islam Shaykh Muhammad Qāsim Nānotawī, passed through Shaykh al-Hind Mawlana Maḥmūd al-Hasan and Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawī, reached Mufti A’zam Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafiʿ, and is currently exemplified by Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah be pleased with all our scholars. *Āmīn*).

3) Our honourable shaykh mentioned the simplicity of great scholars – particularly, some recent ones from the Indian subcontinent. He said they were very simple and modest in their appearance, such that no one would even realize that they were great scholars. They were humble and did not think anything of themselves, despite being everything. He gave examples from the lives of Shaykh Mufti Aziz al-Rahman, Shaykh al-Hind Mawlana Maḥmūd al-Hasan and Mufti Muhammad Shafiʿ (may Allah have mercy on all of them).

Shaykh Mufti Aziz al-Rahman (d. 1347/1928), despite being the head mufti of Dār al-‘Ulūm in Deoband (India) and a mountain of knowledge, was so humble that he would visit the market and purchase household necessities and groceries for his own family, as well as for the widows of

his neighbourhood. He would go to their houses and deliver the items himself.

In relation to Shaykh al-Hind Mawlana Maḥmūd al-Hasan, he mentioned that he possessed unique humility. He was a teacher of Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿs father (Mawlana Muhammad Yāsīn). Whenever he needed anything, he would personally come to the house of his student and knock on the door. Upon being asked who is at the door, he would simply say, “The servant [of Allah], Maḥmūd.”

Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿ (may Allah have mercy on him) also inherited this trait from his teachers and elders. Despite possessing a high level of knowledge and piety, he would carry out, not only his personal tasks, but rather, the tasks of his relatives and others in his neighbourhood. People would see him walking with bags in his hands, not realizing who he is. Dr. ‘Abd al-Hayy ‘Ārifī (may Allah have mercy on both) once saw him delivering some items, and said to those around him, “Do you even know who this is? This is the grand mufti!”

It is worth noting that the above examples of humility, quoted by our honourable shaykh, are just a few out of many. The truth is, such incidents are so numerous that an entire book is required to discuss them. Our shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani’s book, *The Great Scholars of The Deoband Islamic Seminary*, is a good read in this regard.

4) One the first day, our honourable shaykh advised us to read Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawī’s (may Allah have mercy on him) book, entitled: *Haqīqat Tasawwuf wa Taqwā*. The book is part of a series of discourses (*khutubāt*) by Hakīm al-Umma, and contains 10 discourses on the reality of *tasawwuf/tazkiya* and *taqwā*. The shaykh advised us saying, “Try to read the entire book, during your stay here.”

5) Dr. Mawlana Hassān Ashraf Usmani, the younger son of our shaykh, would usually join us for dinner. I had met him on a few occasions

during my studies at Dār al-‘Ulūm (he was a student of the ‘ālimiyya course, at the time), but I did not get to know him personally. As such, it was a pleasure meeting and spending some time with him too over dinner. Dr. Hassān is currently a teacher at the Dār al-‘Ulūm. He also has a question and answer column in the Urdu Al-Balāgh journal. May Allah accept his services. *Āmīn*.

During one of the dinners, Dr. Hassān briefly described his activities, mentioning that he teaches his father’s masterpiece work, *Fiqh al-Buyū’*. Among other topics discussed, was the current corona virus pandemic and its new strain that was being reported in the UK. Our honourable shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him), remarked how such a minuscule and almost invisible organism, which can only be viewed with the aid of an optical microscope, has brought the entire world to its knees. I added that it is similar to how Allah Most High used a small mosquito to destroy Nimrod (Namrūd), the king during the time of Sayyiduna Ibrahim (peace be upon him). The respected shaykh also remarked that, due to the pandemic, it has been the longest duration since 1978, in which he has not travelled abroad.

6) A discussion ensued about the weather and seasonal changes in daylight hours in countries at extreme latitudes such as the UK. The respected shaykh remarked that, in contrast to most Muslim and eastern countries, the lengths of the day and night are imbalanced and disproportionate. Thus, it is difficult for Muslims residing in such countries to plan their day around prayer times. In our countries, however, he said, the change is small, due to being close to the equator. Therefore, one is able to easily plan and schedule one’s daily activities.

He highlighted Norway as a country where this change is extreme between the summer and winter months. He has travelled to Norway many times, including the city of Trumso and other extreme northern areas, where the sun does not set during certain summer months and

does not rise in certain winter months. I added that I have also visited Norway, 11 times in total, including the northern parts and North Cape (Europe's most northerly point). I mentioned how, during my visit, we proclaimed the *adhān* and offered *salah* in an extended tunnel beneath a river. This brought a smile to his face.

7) The respected shaykh also described the many bounties and natural resources granted by Allah Most High to Pakistan, such as vegetation, various types of fruits and natural beauty. He remarked that Pakistan is blessed with a wide variety of native fruits (as opposed to, for example, the UK, where only a handful of fruits are produced). A variety of fruits grow in Pakistan; some fruits have up to ten different types. Pakistan has every type of landscape; it has deserts, forests, lush green fields and meadows, rivers and streams, sea and different types of mountains. He added that the Skardu region is particularly beautiful (a scenic valley with blue waters and high mountains, located at an elevation of over 7,300 feet in Pakistan's northern Gilgit-Baltistan region). The flight from Islamabad to Skardu comprises some breath-taking scenery of snow-covered Himalayan and Karakoram Mountains, beautiful lakes and the Indus River. Northern Pakistan – consisting of regions such as Naran, Kaghan, Swat, Chitral and Gilgit – is so vast that it is probably twice the size of the UK. The weather is also unique in the region, such that one is able to experience varying weather conditions within a short distance.

He further remarked that when Pakistan was founded, the entire Muslim world had its sight on our country with high hopes and expectations. I commented that Pakistan, in an overall sense, is in a much better condition, from an Islamic perspective, than many other Muslim and Arab countries. Scholars and Islamic values are generally respected here. The shaykh added that the country is full with mosques and madrasas, with up to 2000 madrasas just in and around Karachi. We pray Allah Most High protect Pakistan from evil, make it a better

country and enable it to fulfil the dreams of its founders such as Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawī and Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ (may Allah have mercy on both of them). *Āmīn*.

8) I asked our honourable shaykh about the famous late hadith scholar of Makka, Shaykh Muhammad Yāsīn al-Fādānī (d. 1990), who granted him the licence to transmit (*ijaza*) various hadith chains. My question was in relation to the various *musalsalāt* narrations, whether he had received the licences (*ijazāt*) in one meeting or on different occasions. He responded by saying that he received them in various meetings, during his frequent visits to Makka al-Mukarrama. Shaykh Fādānī (may Allah have mercy on him) preferred that a seeker visit him repeatedly, instead of granting them all at once.

9) On one occasion, I mentioned that I often see our beloved shaykh in dreams – sometimes, more than once a week. I added that I dreamt a few days ago that he had passed away, interpreting it to indicate that Allah Most High will grant him a long life with wellbeing (*‘āfiya*). The shaykh commented that people often see him in dreams and relay their dreams, which normally contain glad tidings about him. He has a file where they are stored, but it is private. On the cover of the file, the famous statement of the great interpreter of dreams, Imam Muhammad ibn Sīrīn (may Allah have mercy on him), is written, “A [good] dream may make a believer happy, but let it not deceive him.”

His father, Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ (Allah have mercy on him), would also keep a record of all the good dreams people saw about him, in a file. However, on the cover, he wrote the following reminder to himself and others, “In this file, I am recording dreams which the righteous servants of Allah have seen about me. I record them because they contain glad tidings and good omen – may Allah rectify me by virtue of these dreams. However, I warn all the readers that these dreams are not a criterion for superiority and righteousness. No decision should be made



about me on the basis of these dreams. The real criterion are the actions and dealings of a man, during his hours of wakefulness. People should not fall into deception, on account of dreams.”

10) Once, during dinner, I asked him the following light-hearted question: “Who are you looking forward to meeting the most in paradise, from those whom you have not met in this life, other than the prophets (may peace and blessings be upon them) and companions (may Allah be pleased with them)?” He replied by saying that it is very difficult to answer, as our *umma* is full of great people; it is difficult to select one.

I then narrowed down the question and rephrased it by asking, “Would you want to meet Imam Abu Hanifa or Imam Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on them both) first? He replied in a light-hearted manner, “Imam Abu Hanifa ... and also Imam Malik (may Allah have mercy on them).” He continued, “I feel a special congeniality/connection (*munāsaba*) with the personality of Imam Malik and his school of *fiqh*. One of the first hadith books that I taught was the *Al-Muwatta* of Imam Malik (he also taught *Sunan Ibn Majah*, during his early days). I taught the chapter on trade and commerce (*Kitab al-Buyū*) first, and found it very challenging due to the complexity and depth of his *fiqh* and the Maliki School terminologies. I still have my hand-written notes from that time on *Sunan Ibn Majah*”. May Allah grant us entry to Paradise and be pleased with all our righteous predecessors. *Āmīn*.

11) During one evening, a scholar by the name of Mawlana Sa’id Yusuf Kashmiri, and his colleagues, visited our honourable shaykh. When I arrived at our shaykh’s residence, he introduced me to his guests, saying, “In appearance, he looks very young, but....” and then went on to say certain words of praise, by way of encouragement, which I do not feel comfortable in repeating. I am surely undeserving of what he said about me, but it reflects his kindness and compassion towards others. I

pray Allah Most High grant me the ability to better myself in accordance with his good opinion of me. *Āmīn*. He also added that I am a former student of Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, and in recent years I have been writing memoirs of his travels.

Various discussions took place with the guests over dinner – particularly, in relation to some great luminaries of the recent past. Our honourable shaykh mentioned the late renowned scholar of Multan (Pakistan), Mawlana Khayr Muhammad Jalandhari (d. 1390/1970), the founder of the Khayr al-Madāris seminary and student/disciple of Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī (may Allah have mercy on them both). He said that his father, Mawlana Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘, and Mawlana Khayr Muhammad enjoyed good relations from their time together at the *zāwiya/khanqāh* of Hakīm al-Umma (may Allah have mercy on all of them). Prior to the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, Mawlana Khayr Muhammad resided in Jalandhar – a city in the Indian state of Punjab. Whenever Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ travelled to Punjab from Deoband, passing through Jalandhar, Mawlana Khayr Muhammad and his son would bring home-cooked breakfast for him at Jalandhar railway station, and stay with him until his train departed. He continued this tradition even after migrating to the Pakistani city of Multan. Whenever Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ travelled to Lahore from Karachi, via Multan, Mawlana Khayr Muhammad would greet him at Multan railway station with breakfast. Mawlana Khayr Muhammad would also frequently visit Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. Upon his death, Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ composed some Urdu couplets in which he recorded the date of his passing (may Allah have mercy on both scholars. *Āmīn*).

Our respected shaykh, thereafter, mentioned another scholar from the same city of Jalandhar – Mawlana Muhammad Ali Jalandhari (may Allah have mercy on him), who worked tirelessly for the cause of *khatm al-*

*nubuwwa* (finality of prophethood). The late Mawlana would often visit Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, and express a lot of affection towards him.

Thereafter, the shaykh highlighted the strong relationship between his father and Shaykh Mawlana Muhammad Idrīs Kāndahlawi (d. 1394/1974 - may Allah have mercy on them both). Shaykh Kāndahlawi was also a disciple of Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Thānawī. He has authored several notable works, such as *Ma‘ārif al-Qur’an* (Urdu exegesis of the Qur’an, in 8 volumes), *Sīrat al-Mustafa* (Urdu prophetic biography, in 3 volumes) and *Al-Ta’līq al-Sabīh* (Arabic commentary on the hadith collection, *Mishkāt al-Masābīh*, in 7 volumes). Our respected shaykh said that Shaykh Idrīs Kāndahlawi (may Allah have mercy on him) was a unique and very spiritual person. Once, during a visit, Shaykh Idrīs Kāndahlawi remarked that his friendship with our shaykh’s father, referring to him as “Molvi Shafī”, extends to 52 years. Shaykh Idrīs Kāndahlawi added that nothing has ever come in between their good relationship, remarking that often relationships are soured between scholars due to jealousy. However, his approach is such that whenever he sees an accomplishment of Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ (may Allah have mercy on both), he considers it as his own accomplishment, due to their close bond. Shaykh Idrīs Kāndahlawi light-heartedly referred to the example cited in Arabic grammar books of an adjective being mentioned after the subject, but, it is actually an adjective of someone or something associated with the subject. For example, “*Zāydunil ālimu akhūhū*” (Zayd, whose brother is a scholar).

Our respected shaykh further mentioned that Shaykh Idrīs Kāndahlawi deliberately gave some of his books the same titles as those given by Mufti Muhammad Shafī‘ (may Allah have mercy on them both) for his books, such as *Ma‘ārif al-Qur’an* and *Da‘āwī Mirza*. He did that out of love and affection for the latter. The shaykh also described an

incident of Shaykh Idrīs Kāndahlawi, which reflected his sense of humour.

Finally, a brief discussion took place regarding Shaykh Mawlana ‘Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī (d. 1397/1977) of Uttar Pradesh, India. The late Mawlana was a prolific writer and exegete of the Qur’an, having penned an extensive commentary in English, as well as one in Urdu, entitled *Tafsīr Mājidi*. His early life was spent studying philosophy and harbouring doubts regarding Islamic concepts. He then connected with Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawi and stayed in his company. He later authored a book entitled, *Hakīm al-Umma*, in which he beautifully explains his relationship with Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawi. May Allah have mercy on both of them. (*Nuqūsh Raftegān* by Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, p.79)

Our honourable shaykh stated that he does not remember meeting Mawlana Daryābādī – although, the two exchanged many letters. The late Mawlana would always write words of encouragement and express a great deal of affection towards him. However, one of his grave mistakes was that he did not consider the followers of Mirza Ghulām Ahmad Qādiyāni disbelievers. Many scholars tried explaining to him the reasons why the Qādiyānis are considered non-Muslims, but he refused to change his stance. May Allah Most High forgive his mistake. *Āmīn*. The shaykh added that, although extremely beneficial, Mawlana Daryābādī’s exegesis of the Qur’an contains certain controversial aspects relating to prophetic miracles and other similar matters. He said that he has written a detailed review of *Tafsīr Mājidi*, published in his book, *Tabsire*. In it, he points out the erroneous stances of the author, as well as highlighting the good points. Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Binnori (may Allah have mercy on him) was very pleased with his review and praised him.

The meeting with the guest scholars ended with a *du‘ā* by our honourable shaykh. Thereafter, the guests departed, and the shaykh walked to their car to bid them farewell. Being able to hear him discuss all these various scholars, and indeed all the other discussions over various dinners, was a highlight of my visit to Karachi. May Allah Most High grant him strength and a long life of wellbeing, so that the *umma* may continue to benefit from him. *Āmīn*.





### *Honouring Guests and Compassion*

Allah Most High has made our dear and beloved shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, an embodiment of mercy, compassion and kindness. Anyone who comes into contact with him, even for a short duration, experiences this beautiful character-trait first-hand. Those who have a connection with him – be it on a limited scale – are always in receipt of his compassion and care. The manner in which he takes an interest in the personal affairs/problems of others, despite his extremely busy schedule, is a great testament to his character and

beautiful personality – in accordance with the *sunna* of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him).

*Al-ḥamdu lillah*, we were also in receipt of his compassion during our two-week stay at Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi. The respected shaykh is extremely busy at the Dār al-ʿUlūm, with numerous daily responsibilities. Despite this, the manner in which he took a personal interest in our day-to-day stay was something that could only be his domain. I do not have suitable words to describe his affection and compassion towards me, despite not being worthy of such kindness.

As an example, I suffered a severe stomach upset/bug (a trip to Pakistan without a stomach upset is not a trip to Pakistan!). Our honourable shaykh came to know of it. Thus, after one of the prayers, he, in a concerned manner, asked me about my condition. I responded that I had suffered a stomach upset all night and was, therefore, abstaining from consuming anything. Later, after *ʿisha* prayers, he took me to his house and insisted that I eat something, adding that a special, light and stomach-friendly dish would be prepared – namely, Khichdi. Upon my polite refusal, the shaykh went into his kitchen and returned with a plate full of bananas and some medicine. He asked me to take the bananas with me to the guesthouse and explained how to take the medicine. I thanked him, returned to the guesthouse and took the medicine. I was sitting with some brothers at the guesthouse for an hour or so, already overwhelmed by his compassion, when one of the security guards came with a bowl of fresh yogurt, sent by the respected shaykh! I was left stunned by his level of kindness. May Allah Most High reward him immensely and grant him the best of this life and the next. *Āmīn*.

Furthermore, the respected shaykh also took a personal interest in other aspects of our stay, such as our trips to Multan and Lahore, amongst other things. On the final day, he enquired about our corona-

virus test results and the details of our return flight. After we landed at London Heathrow airport, I sent him a message, stating that we had landed safely. He responded by saying that he was concerned, and is glad to know of our safe return. There are many other examples of his compassion and kind-heartedness, but the above should suffice *in shā Allah*.

### ***Sahih al-Bukhari Lessons***

Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him) has been teaching *Sahih al-Bukhari* at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi since 1999, after the demise of his teacher, and previous lecturer of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Shaykh al-Hadith Mawlana Sahbān Maḥmūd (may Allah have mercy on him). He initially taught the entire book, but now the second half of it is taught by Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani. His lectures on *Sahih al-Bukhari* have been transcribed and published in approximately 12 volumes, entitled *In‘ām al-Bāri*. During my student days at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, *Sahih al-Bukhari* used to be taught by Shaykh Sahbān Maḥmūd, whose few lessons I managed to attend, *Al-ḥamdu lillah*. At the time, our honourable shaykh used to teach *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. I sought special dispensation to attend his lessons, despite being enrolled in the *fiqh* and *fatwa* specialisation (*takhassus*) programme. As such, my day would begin with participation in the *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* lessons, after which I would make my way to the Dār al-Iftā’ for the rest of the day.

During our current visit, we attended our honourable shaykh’s *Sahih al-Bukhari* lessons every day. The lesson would commence after *fajr* and breakfast, at 8:00am, and end at approximately 9:15am. Our beloved shaykh would walk from his house, with security personnel around him, and reach the final year hadith studies auditorium shortly after 8am. In order to attend his lesson, or any other lesson for that matter, one must follow the protocol in place. Written permission is required from the



teacher, as well as the director of education (*nāzim al-ta'limāt*) at the Dār al-ʿUlūm.

It was an absolute honour to attend these lessons, sitting amongst students and being one of them, in a classroom setting, after so many years! This year, there are approximately 500 students in the final year hadith studies class. They were extremely hospitable and welcomed us each morning with warmth, giving us space – at times, even their own – for us to sit in the auditorium. We chose to sit in the front row, whilst the shaykh would be seated on a stage at the front of the auditorium, with a security guard stood next to him. We also had the honour of reciting some hadiths from *Sahih al-Bukhari* during one of the lessons.

The respected shaykh was teaching chapters on trade and commerce (*Kitab al-Buyūʿ*). What can be said about his lectures other than that they are masterpieces of scholarship, precision and clarity. The shaykh is a master of presenting complex subject matters in a simplified, systematic and lucid manner, such that it is easy to follow and understand. Islamic finance is a household topic for the shaykh, having spent his entire life in its study. This is clearly visible in his lectures. It is evident in his lectures that he is encapsulating the essence of the subject matter, but with a holistic vision. In my view, his lectures represent what is known in Arabic as “*al-jāmiʿ wa ʿl-mānīʿ*” (comprehensive, yet not unnecessarily detailed). It was also interesting to note that he translated every hadith of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, which often is not the case in final year hadith studies classes. Moreover, the students often asked questions in relation to the subject, and the shaykh happily answered them, until they were satisfied.

An interesting point of spiritual subtlety was mentioned by the shaykh in one of the lessons, which was a real eye opener for me. Whilst explaining the hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him), “Once the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon

him) went out during the day. [I accompanied him.] Neither did he speak to me nor I to him, until he reached the market of Banū Qaynuqā' [...]" Our shaykh commented that mere companionship with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and pious people is an objective in itself, and is beneficial, regardless of whether there is conversation or not. It is not necessary to engage in conversation with a pious person in order to spiritually benefit from them. Merely being with them, even if it be without conversation, is beneficial. Allah Most High transfers the goodness (*ḥayd*) from one to the other."

May Allah Most High grant us beneficial knowledge, increase us and enable us to put into practice what we learn. *Āmīn*.





### ***Attending Office Hours***

On the first day of our visit, our respected shaykh said to us that we could go to his office each day and sit in his company, if we so desired. Accordingly, we would attend his office from approximately 11:30am to 2:30pm (with a break for *zuhr* prayers). Since his recent illness, he has been using the front lounge of his residence as his office, instead of going to his regular office.

The shaykh's regular office is situated near the library. During my student days in 1999, we would have our *Usūl al-Iftā'* lessons with him at this office. An office reception is adjacent to his office, where visitors are received by his secretary, my dear friend, Raf'at Saghīr Faruqi. Brother Raf'at has been our honourable shaykh's secretary for over 20 years. I have known him since my student days and formed a good friendship with him. He is a very dedicated, hardworking and humble

individual, whom Allah has blessed with the company of our beloved shaykh for such a long duration. He is responsible for receiving visitors, arranging meetings, dealing with emails/letters received by the shaykh and managing his travel schedules, amongst other duties. Although I remained in communication with him – especially, during the last few years – I had not seen him since 2001. As such, it was a pleasure to meet him once again, see his beaming smile and sit with him in the office reception. May Allah bless him and his family, reward his efforts, grant him wellbeing, and allow him to continue serving our dear shaykh. *Āmīn.*

Brother Rafat is joined in the office reception by my dear friend, Shaykh Mawlana Shakir Jakhūra, who serves as our shaykh's academic secretary. Originally from South Africa, Shaykh Shakir studied and graduated from Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi, completing the *ʿālimiyya* course in 2005 and *takhassus/fatwa* specialization programme in 2008. He has been serving our beloved shaykh since 2009. He resides with his family within the Dār al-ʿUlūm compound, and his daily activities include teaching some books in the *ʿālimiyya* course and assisting our shaykh with his academic work. He has contributed to some of our shaykh's recent publications, such as the two volume *Maqālāt al-Uthmāni* and his catalogue of chains of hadith transmissions (*thabat*).

I have been in communication with Shaykh Shakir for the last few years – although, we first met during his visit to the UK in 2019 with our respected shaykh. We then travelled together to Malta and Cyprus, as part of our trip with our shaykh, regarding which I have penned my reflections. I was honoured to share a room with him during the trip, and learnt much from his knowledge, character and wisdom. He is a very gentle, sincere and modest scholar who, in my humble opinion, is very suitable to serve as our honourable shaykh's academic secretary. I have expressed to him, on many occasions, that I have huge admiration

for him. May Allah Most High bless him and grant him *tawfiq* to continue serving our shaykh and benefitting from him. *Āmīn*.

Incidentally, there is a notice outside our shaykh's office, comprising various guidelines for visitors. For general benefit, an English summary of these guidelines is as follows:

"I welcome all those who come to meet me, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity. May Allah grant you wellbeing in both worlds. *Āmīn*. However, please keep in mind the following points, in order not to waste my time or yours:

1) I do not have knowledge regarding the following matters: a) *wazīfa* (special litanies for fulfilling needs/removing difficulties), b) *ʿamaliyyat* (special practices to remove the effects of black magic/*sihr* and jinn possession), c) amulets (*ta'wīz*), and d) interpretations of dreams. Therefore, please enquire elsewhere regarding the above matters.

2) After much experience, I have ceased doing the following – please do not insist on: a) writing endorsements to collect funds/donations, b) writing prefaces/forewords for books, c) releasing press statements, and d) partaking in marriage, *khatm* and other ritual gatherings.

3) The following are strictly against my principles. Therefore, please do not burden me with them: a) mediating with the authorities, and b) making donation appeals.

4) If you require a *fatwa*, we have a dedicated Dār al-Iftā' operating under our supervision. Please refer to it. *Jazākum Allāh khayran.*"

In any case, for sentimental reasons, we visited our shaykh's original office and I was pleased to see my recently published work, [\*A Trip to the Land of Scholars and Saints\*](#), on his desk. On more than one occasion, I sat with his two secretaries, Brother Raf'at and Shaykh Shakir, in the office reception, engaging in light-hearted conversations.

As mentioned earlier, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him) was conducting his daily activities from the front lounge of his residence, and that is where we would attend each day during our visit. Our intention was to sit in his company and benefit from seeing him engaged in his various activities. During this time, we would seldom engage in any conversations with him, as not to disturb him in his work. During my visit to Karachi in 2001, a year after my studies, I did the same – spending about an hour each day sitting quietly at one side of his office, observing and trying to learn from him. I personally believe that such close observation and monitoring of one’s teachers and mentors, and studying them, is indispensable for spiritual and academic growth. May Allah grant us the benefits of such blessed experiences. *Āmīn*.

During his office hours, the respected shaykh would attend to the muftis and students of *Dār al-Iftā’*, who came to him with their research on issues of *fiqh* and *fatwa*, seeking his advice and guidance. Much could be learnt from their interaction. On numerous occasions, the shaykh highlighted a particular point, or context, which was completely missed by the mufti researching/writing the *fatwa*. The wisdom and deep insight (*tafaqquh*), with which he examines issues, demonstrates a lifetime of experience and God-gifted acumen. It is normally difficult to acquire such insight without staying in the company of other similar people of *tafaqquh*.

For example, in relation to a question about a particular dispensation (*rukhsa*) during prayer, the student wrote in his answer that a *rukhsa* is granted by the Shari’a. However, the respected shaykh suggested that the questioner should be asked further questions regarding his disability and condition. He added that precaution is required, before providing an answer with the dispensation. This approach is in conformity with the stance of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi<sup>c</sup> (may

Allah have mercy on him), in that one must be precautionous before resorting to any *rukhsa* granted by the Shari'a. However, once established that a *rukhsa* is indeed warranted, then one must not hesitate either in acting upon the *rukhsa* granted by Allah and His Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him).

On some occasions, the shaykh would respond to various letters and emails received from different parts of the world. The volume of mail he receives on a daily basis is very substantial. Seeing his energy and resolve in attending to the mail, and responding to each one individually, puts some of us younger than him to shame. Despite his age, his resolve has not dwindled – when most people in other professions would have probably retired and relaxing at a family home in some remote island!

Occasionally, staff from various departments of the Dār al-‘Ulūm would come to see the shaykh, seeking his guidance on various matters. These included the staff working at the Al-Balāgh journal office, as well as the hadith encyclopaedia department.

On most days, however, during our visit, the respected shaykh was engaged in online meetings relating to Islamic finance with scholars and experts from different parts of the world. His secretary, Mawlana Shakir, would set up the computer before his arrival, and thereafter the meeting would take place for approximately two hours. Some of these meetings occurred with members of the Shari'ah Board at the [Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions \(AAOIFI\)](#), whilst the majority were on the platform of the [Islamic Financial Services Board \(IFSB\)](#). To quote the website of the latter, “IFSB is an international standard-setting organisation that promotes and enhances the soundness and stability of the Islamic financial services industry by issuing global prudential standards and guiding principles for the industry, broadly defined to include banking, capital

markets and insurance sectors... The IFSB is an association of central banks, monetary agencies and inter-governmental international organizations that have an explicit mandate for promoting Islamic finance.” Inaugurated in 2002 and based in Malaysia, the IFSB prepares standards and guidelines, adhering to a rigorous due process, for regulatory and supervisory authorities/central banks that are its members. In other words, Islamizing the standards set by regulatory authorities of various countries.

It was fascinating to witness our honourable shaykh engaged in these drawn-out meetings with scholars like Shaykh ‘AbdAllah al-Manī‘ (member, Council of Senior Scholars, and advisor to the Saudi Royal Court) and other industry experts. During the meetings, the text of the standards was read out, and the participants deliberated, suggesting changes and corrections. Each sentence and word was carefully scrutinized and matters as specific as adding brackets to a word would be suggested. It was interesting to note how all the other members held the opinion of our esteemed shaykh in high regard. If, during a debate and disagreement between the members, he made a suggestion, it was wholeheartedly accepted by everyone. The shaykh, in turn, was very gracious in listening to the opinions of others, and he did not act in an authoritarian manner. With patience, gentleness, wisdom and deep insight, he settled any matter of dispute that arose with one simple sentence. There was once an ongoing debate between the members. The shaykh continued listening to them and then remarked, “What is the issue? Replace the following phrase with such-and-such wording, and the matter is resolved!” The rest of the members unreservedly accepted his suggestion and the disagreement ended. *Al-ḥamdu lillah*, our beloved shaykh is not just a blessing for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, rather, he is a great blessing for the entire *umma*. May Allah protect him and grant him a long life with wellbeing. *Āmīn*.



The shaykh later explained to us that he has been involved with the IFSB for many years and travelled to Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) regularly to attend its meetings. He added that the constant travel was becoming burdensome, and, therefore, being able to conduct these meetings online proved to be helpful. He remarked that preparing these standards is very complex and it requires thorough understanding of many matters, such as enquiring the meaning of certain terms used by the regulatory authorities from the experts. It is a new area for us, he said, and we are still learning new concepts on a regular basis. May Allah accept these efforts. *Āmīn.*





## SHAYKH MUFTI MAḤMŪD ASHRAF USMANI

Along with the aforementioned Shaykhayn, it was also a pleasure meeting some of the other teachers and shuyukh of Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, during our visit. Amongst them was my respected teacher, Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani (may Allah preserve him). Shaykh Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani was born in 1951 (this makes him 70 years old). He is the grandson of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi<sup>c</sup> (may Allah have mercy on him), and nephew of Mufti Muhammad Rafi<sup>c</sup> Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect them both). His father, Mawlana Zaki Kayfi (may Allah have mercy on him), was the eldest son of Mufti Muhammad Shafi<sup>c</sup>, who passed away a year before the passing of his father. As such, despite being the nephew of Mufti Muhammad Rafi<sup>c</sup> Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, Shaykh Maḥmūd Ashraf is not very much younger than them – with a gap of around 7-8 years between him and Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah preserve them).

Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani has the honour of spending time with his grandfather, Mufti Muhammad Shafi<sup>c</sup> (may Allah have mercy on him), being his first grandchild. In fact, his first pledge (*bay’a*) of *tasawwuf/tazkiya* was at the hands of his grandfather. He later received permissions (*ijāzāt*) in *tasawwuf/tazkiya* from other shuyukh, such as Shaykh Haji Muhammad Sharif (d. 1405/1985 - may Allah have mercy on him). He completed his ‘*ālīmiyya*’ course at the renowned Jāmi‘ah Ashrafiyya in Lahore (Pakistan), where his teachers included Shaykh Mawlana Muhammad Idrīs Kāndahlawi (may Allah have mercy on him),

amongst others. He then completed the *fatwa* specialization (*takhassus fi 'l-fiqh wa 'l-ifta*) programme at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi under his grandfather, two uncles and Shaykh Mufti ‘Āshiq Ilāhi Bulandshihri (may Allah bless them all). Later, he studied at the Islamic University of Medina for approximately two years. As a teacher, he initially taught at Jāmi‘ah Ashrafiyya (Lahore) for 19 years, and, thereafter, has been a very successful and much-loved teacher at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi for the last 30 years. Currently, he is a head mufti at the Dār al-Iftā’ of Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, as well as a teacher of *Sahih al-Bukhari* (alongside Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani). He has also authored some very beneficial works, such as a booklet on spirituality (*tasawwuf/tazkiya*), *Knowledge and Forbearance*, and *Amusements and Play: its Limits in Islam*.

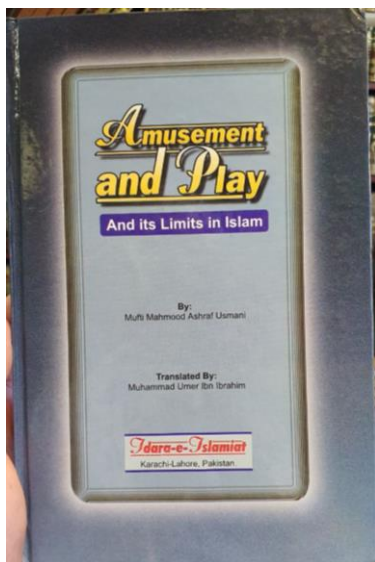
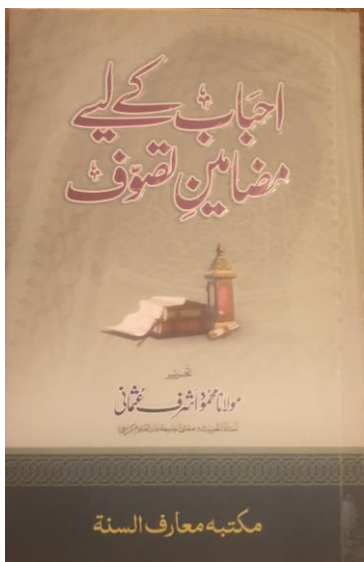
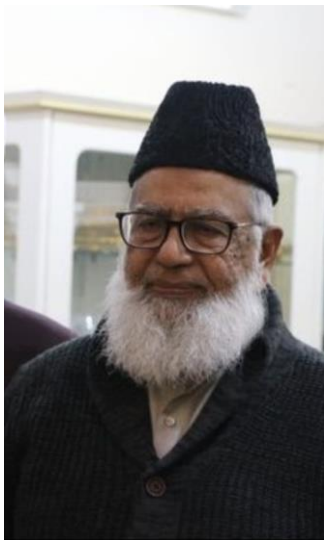
Shaykh Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani was an integral part of the Dār al-Iftā’ even during my student days at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. He was, and still is, much loved by the students, due to his affectionate nature and piety. It is an honour to have trained under him during the *fatwa* specialization (*takhassus*) programme, and, as mentioned previously, he was amongst the senior muftis who checked the answers written by students and approved them. I have several *fatāwa*/answers, written during my student days, with his signature of approval.

Moreover, during my studies in Damascus (Syria), I annotated and re-published the Arabic work, *Al-Muḥannad ala 'l-Mufannad*. I took a manuscript with me to Karachi during my 2001 visit and requested Shaykh Maḥmūd Ashraf to write a foreword. Not only did he write a detailed foreword, in which he made some very pertinent points, he checked my entire work and made corrections where necessary. He, thereafter, had the book published from Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi’s publishing house, Maktaba Dār al-‘Ulūm. May Allah reward him immensely. *Āmīn*.

On the first day of our current visit, we saw Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf being taken on a wheelchair to the mosque for *jumu'a* prayers. We rushed to greet him, and to my astonishment, he recognized me instantly, even though it had been 19 years since I last met him. Later, in the evening, after *maghrib* prayers, we visited him at his residence. He welcomed us with warmth and kindness, and provided hospitality with tea and other refreshments. He enquired about the condition of the Muslims, mosques and Islamic institutions in the UK. He was keen to know about our current activities and asked me about the wellbeing of my respected father, Shaykh Mawlana Adam (may Allah preserve him). By way of encouragement, he stated that he enjoys reading my reflections/travelogues in the Al-Balāgh journal (Urdu translations of my English articles), of my trips abroad with Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, saying, out of humility: "I read about your travels with Shaykh al-Islam, and I feel envious." My colleague attended his daily *Sahih al-Bukhari* lectures during our visit.

Sadly, through Allah's Divine Decree, his eldest son, Mawlana Hammad Ashraf, passed away suddenly in 2018. He was only 38 years of age. Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani remarked that his son's death was one of the greatest trials of his life. I added that the tragedy of him losing his son during his lifetime resulted in a commonality between him and his grandfather, Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on him). The late grand mufti also lost a son during his lifetime – none other than Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf's father, Mawlana Zaki Kayfi. He responded by saying, there is a stark difference between him and his grandfather, in terms of dealing with such a tragedy. Mufti Muhammad Shafi' was a mountain of patience and forbearance. May Allah have mercy on his son, Mawlana Hammad Ashraf, and grant our teacher, Shaykh Mufti Maḥmūd Ashraf Usmani, the highest reward for enduring this tragedy with so much patience (*sabr*) and grant him comfort. He has been unwell for the last few years, suffering

complications of the heart. May Allah grant him health and a long life with wellbeing. *Āmīn*.

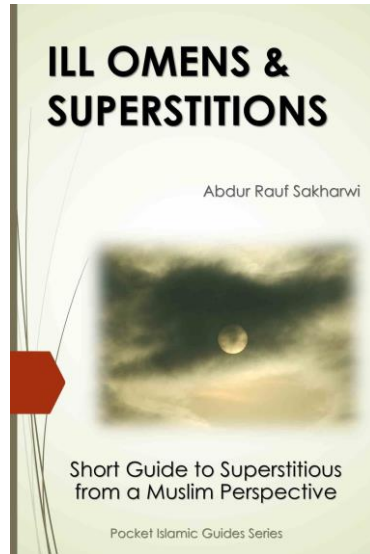
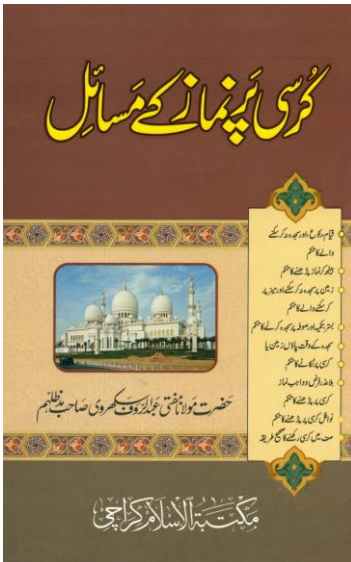
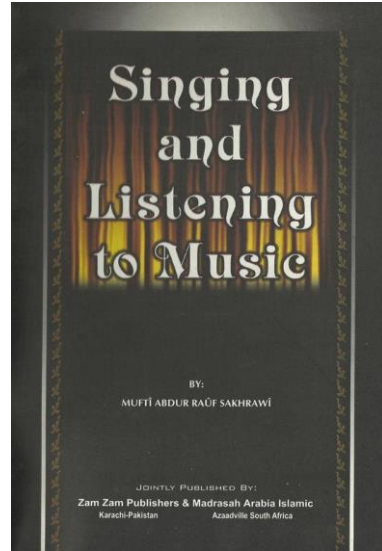
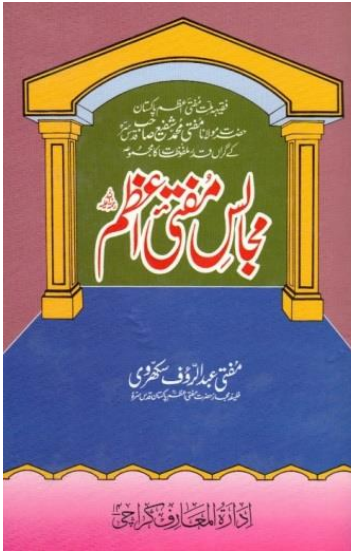


## SHAYKH MUFTI ‘ABD AL-RA’ŪF SAKKHARWI

Shaykh Mufti ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Sakkharwi (may Allah preserve him) is also a senior mufti at the Dār al-Iftā’, and teacher of hadith. He has been teaching portions of *Sahih Muslim* at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi for many years. Born in 1951, he initially studied in his hometown of Sakkhar/Sukkur (Sindh). He, thereafter, completed his final year of the ‘ālimiyya course, as well as *takhassus*, at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi under Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘ (may Allah have mercy on him) and others. Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘ also granted him permission (*ijāza*) in *tasawwuf/tazkiya*. He is also the author of many beneficial Urdu works, some of which have been translated to English, such as: *Virtuous Deeds & Consigning their Reward to Others*, *How Muslim Women Offer Prayers*, and *Customary Collective Recital of Qur’an from a Shari’ah Perspective*.

Even during my time studying at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, Shaykh Mufti ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf was one of the senior muftis at the Dār al-Iftā’. Students required verification for their answers/*fatāwa* from him. He was generally stricter than the other muftis, laying extra emphasis on handwriting and the correct usage of words. I remember him once making me rewrite my answer multiple times, due to bad Urdu handwriting. He would also lead the five daily prayers at the mosque. He continues to lead some of the daily prayers even today.

On the final day of our trip, we briefly visited Mufti ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf at his residence. He welcomed us with warmth and gifted us copies of some of his books. May Allah bless him and grant him wellbeing. *Āmīn*.





## SHAYKH MUFTI ‘ABD AL-MANNAN KHAN

Shaykh Mufti ‘Abd al-Mannan Khan (may Allah preserve him) is another long serving mufti and teacher at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. Originally from Bangladesh, he initially studied in Sylhet (Bangladesh), graduating from Jāmi‘ah Qāsim al-‘Ulūm. He then travelled to Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi in 1978 and completed the *fatwa* specialisation/*takhassus* programme under Mufti Muhammad Rafī‘ Usmani, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect them both) and other senior scholars at the time. He was then employed by Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. Currently, he is a senior teacher and deputy mufti. He has a very friendly personality and is very popular with the students.

*Al-ḥamdu lillah*, I also benefitted from Mufti ‘Abd al-Mannan during my studies at the Dār al-Iftā’ in Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. I had many answers/*fatāwa* checked and approved by him, which I have saved in my file. Often, I would simply go and sit with him and engage in conversation and benefit from him. He was always very welcoming.

Unfortunately, during the first few days of our current visit, he was ill, having tested positive for the corona virus and was in self-isolation. Therefore, we were unable to meet him. However, his eldest son, Mawlana Salman (currently a student in the *takhassus* programme) took us to his house for lunch and arranged a video call with his father. Mawlana Salman assisted us and accompanied us throughout our trip, including our trip to Multan and Lahore (details to come). He is a very considerate, intelligent and astute young man. His constant company brought much comfort and ease to our stay. May Allah reward him

immensely and bless him and his family. *Āmīn*. We managed to spend some time with his father, Shaykh Mufti ‘Abd al-Mannan, during the final couple of days of our visit, enjoying his hospitality and great company. On more than one occasion he remarked that my appearance had not changed since my student days in 1999. May Allah preserve him and grant him wellbeing. *Āmīn*.

We also briefly met or visited some other teachers, such as Mawlana ‘Aziz al-Rahman (lecturer on *Sahih Muslim* and *Sunan Abi Dawud*), Mawlana Rāhat Ali Hashimi, Mawlana Iftikhār Ahmad A’zami and Mufti ‘AbdAllah Burmi. May Allah Most Gracious grant the goodness of both worlds to all the teachers of Jāmi‘ah Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi and their families, reward their efforts and grant them health and wellbeing. *Āmīn*.



## VISITING OTHER KARACHI SEMINARIES

The city of Karachi is blessed with so many Islamic seminaries and erudite scholars (‘ulamā) that it is difficult to find similar examples elsewhere. Many great ‘ulamā have departed from this world in recent times, leaving behind a great legacy in terms of their institutes, students and literary works. Each seminary/madrasa is unique in its own way, serving the *Dīn* of Allah and His Messenger (may peace and blessings be upon him). As such, it was my desire to visit – even if briefly – some of the other well-known madrasas of Karachi, and the ‘ulamā therein. Unfortunately, despite wanting to do so, it was not possible to visit all of them. Nevertheless, the following are some that we did manage to visit.

### *Jāmi’at al-Rashīd*

It had been my long term desire to visit one of the leading Islamic seminaries of Pakistan, Jāmi’at al-Rashīd. The seminary is relatively new. However, its seeds were sown by the great late scholar, Shaykh Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad Ludhyānwī (d. 1422/2002 - may Allah have mercy on his soul). Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad Ludhyānwī was initially a teacher at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, having taught the likes of Mufti Muhammad Taqī Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Rafī‘ Usmani. He then established the Dār al-Iftā’ wa ‘l-Irshād (Centre for Legal Rulings and Guidance) in the Nazimabad district of Karachi. Before his passing, he laid the seeds for Jāmi’at al-Rashīd. The late shaykh is renowned for his 10-volume *fatāwa* collection in Urdu, entitled *Aḥsan al-Fatāwā*. He was well-known for his

strict adherence to the Shari'a and strong opposition to innovations (*bid'a*).

During my studies in Karachi, I regularly visited him and his Dār al-Iftā' wa 'l-Irshād. The institute offered a post-graduate *fatwa* specialization (*takhassus*) programme, as well as spiritual training (*tarbiya*), catering for students who graduated from other seminaries. I would attend his weekly discourses on spirituality (*islāhi majlis*), which took place every Friday, after 'asr prayers. After *maghrib*, a special gathering for scholars and students would be arranged, enabling them to meet him personally.

Jāmi'at al-Rashīd – which, as mentioned, was founded by Shaykh Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad just before his passing – is a progressive Islamic seminary, with a vision to combine between tradition and modernity. It has made significant progress over the last decade and established collaborative partnerships with national and international universities. Its Faculty of Shari'a (*kulliyyat al-shari'a*) caters for disseminating Islamic knowledge among university graduates, and equipping them with the needed Islamic ability to serve in different domains of life such as education, economics, journalism, media, health etc. Jāmi'at al-Rashīd also has a vibrant media wing, JTR Media House. The seminary's current rector, Shaykh Mufti 'Abd al-Rahīm (may Allah preserve him), is a very close student of Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad Ludhyānwī (may Allah have mercy on him).

We reached Jāmi'at al-Rashīd shortly after 'asr prayers. Mufti 'Abd al-Rahīm and the various teachers and members of staff, such as Mufti Muhammad and Shaykh Ahmad Afnān, were seated on the outdoor lawn, engaged in conversation. They welcomed us with great warmth and asked us to take our seats. In fact, Shaykh Ahmad Afnān had earlier insisted that we spend an entire day with them, but, due to time constraints, we respectfully declined. Shaykh Mufti 'Abd al-Rahīm, the rector, instructed me to address the teachers and share some of my

experiences. I mentioned that approximately 20 years ago, I frequently attended the gatherings of Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad Ludhyānwī (may Allah have mercy on him) at the Nazimabad campus. In fact, Mufti ‘Abd al-Rahīm might not remember, I said, I would usually arrive early and sit in his company. I also shared my experiences of studying in Syria and visiting different parts of the Arab world. My colleague also shared his experiences.

After *maghrib* prayers, we were treated to a tasty soup dish and other refreshments in Mufti ‘Abd al-Rahīm’s office, along with a few teachers. Further discussions ensued, in relation to the role of Islamic institutes and scholars. It was intriguing to hear Mufti ‘Abd al-Rahīm’s vision and deep insight. May Allah accept his efforts and grant him and Jāmi‘at al-Rashīd success. *Āmīn*.

Thereafter, we were given a tour of the seminary and shown a documentary on the activities and services of Jāmi‘at al-Rashīd. Shaykh Ahmad Afnān, who remained with us continuously, treated us to a delicious dinner at a pleasant outdoor restaurant. *Mā shā Allah*, he is an intelligent and insightful scholar, whom I had been in communication with for a few months before this first meeting. He is proficient in English and heads the Faculty of Shari’a at Jāmi‘at al-Rashīd. May Allah bless him and enable him to continue serving the *Dīn*. *Āmīn*.







### ***Khānqāh Imdādiya Ashrafiyya***

We also visited Khānqāh Imdādiya Ashrafiyya in the Gulshan Iqbal area of Karachi. The Khānqāh was established in 1980 by the renowned sufi shaykh, Mawlana Shah Hakīm Muhammad Akhtar (d. 1434/2013 - may Allah have mercy on him), to disseminate the teachings of *tazkiya/tasawwuf*. Later, he established a mosque and madrasa (Ashraf al-Madāris) alongside it, providing the full *dars nizāmi* curriculum.

Mawlana Shah Hakīm Muhammad Akhtar was very popular throughout the world. Countless people, including prominent scholars, flocked to him to learn about spiritual reformation. He travelled to various parts of the world to spread and instil the love of Allah and His Messenger (may peace and blessings be upon him) in the hearts of men and women. He has many students and disciples across the globe, including

South Africa, the UK, North America, Bangladesh and many other countries. Students from across Pakistan and other countries came to study at Ashraf al-Madāris to the point that it was no longer possible to cater for them all. As such, in approximately 1995, a brand-new building was constructed on a spacious land in Karachi's Gulistan Jawhar district. The original premises also remained operational.

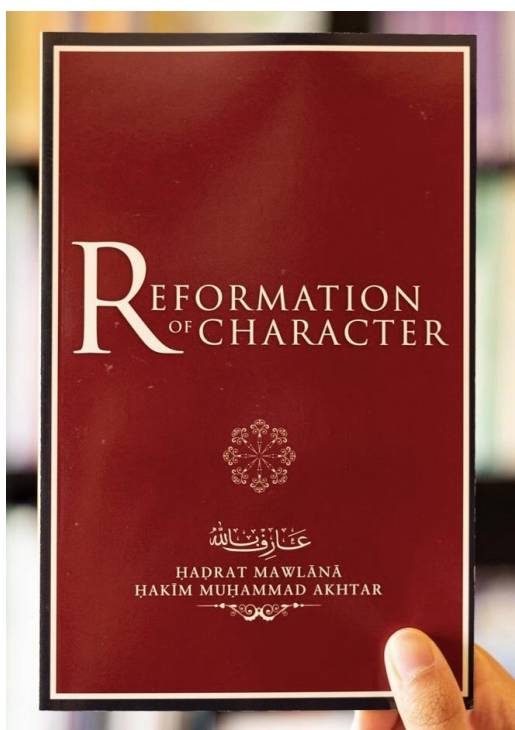
Shaykh Mawlana Shah Hakīm Muhammad Akhtar (may Allah have mercy on him) passed away in 2013, after suffering a stroke and being partially paralysed for a few years. I was fortunate to have spent some time in his company during my student days in Karachi, performing almost every *jumu'a salah* at his Khānqāh mosque in Gulshan Iqbal. Due to his connections with my respected father and elder brother, he treated me with a lot of affection and kindness. His pre-*jumu'a* discourse was attended by many people, and he would instruct me to recite *nashīd*/poetry (generally consisting of poems composed by him) before the large audience. After *jumu'a*, I would have lunch with the late shaykh, his son, Shaykh Mawlana Hakīm Muhammad Mazhar (current rector of Ashraf al-Madāris and the Khānqāh), and his close disciple, Sayyid Ishrat Jamīl Mīr (d. 2015 - may Allah have mercy on him). On one occasion, I failed to go to his room for lunch, and, instead, decided to eat with some UK students. The late shaykh sent his disciple, Sayyid Ishrat Jamīl Mīr, to locate me, with instructions that I should immediately make my way to his room. When I arrived, he said in a firm tone, "From next Friday, make sure that I do not have to call you again!" When departing the Khānqāh, he would normally give me some fruit to eat on my journey back to Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi.

With those fond memories in my mind, we reached Khānqāh Imdādiya Ashrafiyya (in Gulshan Iqbal) shortly before *maghrib salah*. The building has not changed much, nor the roads and streets surrounding it. What had changed, however, was that the personality because of which this



place was filled with goodness and spirituality, was no longer there. We performed *maghrib* in the small mosque, where once people would cram together, eager to listen to his words of wisdom. It felt as though the surrounding walls and pillars were eternally sad upon the loss of someone whom they had become accustomed to. I could not help but stare at the very chair upon which the late shaykh would sit and deliver his heart-warming discourses, and next to which I would stand and recite his poetry. His son, Mawlana Shah Hakīm Muhammad Mazhar, was not present, due to ill health. Thus, we were unable to meet him. However, we briefly met the grandson, Mawlana Ishaq. For sentimental reasons, I requested to be taken to the room of his late grandfather, where I have many memories of sitting and eating with him. May Allah shower his mercy upon the grave up Mawlana Shah Hakim Muhammad Akhtar and grant him a high abode in the hereafter. *Āmīn*.





### ***Jāmi'at al-ʿUlūm al-Islamiyya (Binnori Town)***

From the Khānqāh, we made our way to the famous old seminary, Jāmi'at al-ʿUlūm al-Islamiyya (commonly known as the Binnori Town Madrasa). The seminary was established in 1954 by the late grand scholar and hadith master of his era (*muhaddith al-asr*), Shaykh Sayyid Muhammad Yusuf Binnori (d. 1397/1977 - may Allah have mercy on him). The shaykh was a close friend and colleague of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on him). Both scholars established their seminaries at around the same time – soon after the formation of Pakistan. A close student of Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ʿAli Thānawi and Imam Anwar Shah Kashmīri, Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Binnori (may Allah have mercy on all of them) initially taught *Sahih al-Bukhari* and other books at Jāmi'ah Islamiyya in Dhābel (Gujarat, India). After partition, he migrated to Pakistan, where he first served at a madrasa in Sindh and, thereafter, established the Jāmi'at al-ʿUlūm al-Islamiyya in Binnori Town, Karachi.

Shaykh Binnori was a world-renowned scholar, having travelled to many parts of the world, such as Egypt and other Arab countries. He enjoyed a close friendship with Shaykh Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawthari (may Allah have mercy on him) and other scholars. He worked tirelessly for the cause of *khatm al-nubuwwa* (finality of prophethood), and was an author of several books in Arabic and Urdu – the most famous being his Arabic commentary of a portion of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, entitled *Maʿārif al-Sunan*, in six volumes. This is in addition to various articles that he wrote for journals in Pakistan, as well as in Egypt. He was very fluent in Arabic – a fact that was acknowledged by several Arab scholars too.

The current rector of Jāmi'at al-ʿUlūm al-Islamiyya is Shaykh Dr. ʿAbd al-Razzaq Iskandar, who is approximately 85 years old (may Allah preserve him). The youngest son of Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Binnori

(may Allah have mercy on him), Shaykh Sulayman Binnori, serves as the vice-chancellor. Some great scholars have taught at the seminary, of whom many have sadly been assassinated, such as Shaykh Mawlana Yusuf Ludhyānwi (d. 1421/2000 – not to be confused with Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad Ludhyānwi, mentioned above), Dr. Shaykh HabibAllah Mukhtār (d. 1418/1997), Mufti Nizām al-Dīn Shamzay (d. 1425/2004), Mufti Aḥmad al-Raḥmān (d. 1411/1991) and Shaykh Aslam Shekhupuri (d. 1422/2012). May Allah have mercy on all of them and grant them a lofty status in Paradise. *Āmīn*. The seminary has many branches across the city, with approximately 12,000 students studying at the various branches, including a number of foreign students.

During my time studying in Karachi, I would occasionally visit the Jāmi'at al-'Ulūm al-Islamiyya in Binnori Town. Being located in the centre of Karachi city, one would often pass by it, whatever the destination. The juice shop, next to the Jāmi'ah's entrance, was renowned, where students were often seen enjoying the various types of fresh fruit juices. Shaykh Mawlana Yusuf Ludhyānwi (author of many books, such as *The Differences of the Umma and the Straight Path*) was a close friend of my respected father, and visited us regularly during his UK trips. As such, I would make a point of visiting him during my studies in Karachi. I was also once blessed with a memorable trip, which I will remember for a long time. Upon the invitation from a madrasa in Punjab, I once flew from Karachi to Punjab, in the company of the current rector of the seminary, Dr. Shaykh 'Abd al-Razzaq Iskandar, and the late Mufti Nizām al-Dīn Shamzay. It was a unique experience to sit on the plane, as a young student in 1999, in the middle of two esteemed scholars. It gave me the opportunity to serve them both during the journey to and from Punjab, *Al-ḥamdu lillah*.

With memories of 1999, we reached Binnori Town just prior to *'isha salah*. After prayers, we met a current teacher and mufti, Shaykh Mufti

In'ām al-Haq Qasimi, who took us to his nearby residence for tea and refreshments. We also offered *salām* and recited at the grave of Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Binnori, located in one corner of the seminary, as well as the graves of his son, Mawlana Muhammad Binnori (d. 1419/1998), Mufti Aḥmad al-Raḥmān and Dr. Shaykh ḤabibAllah Mukhtār. May Allah have mercy on all of them, reward their services for the *Dīn* and protect Jāmi'at al-'Ulūm al-Islamiyya from every evil. *Āmīn*.







### *Jāmi'ah Ahsan al-‘Ulūm*

Besides the above seminaries, we also briefly visited Jāmi'ah Ahsan al-‘Ulūm in Gulshan Iqbal (Karachi), founded by the recently deceased Shaykh Mufti Zar Wali Khan (may Allah have mercy on him). We met its director of education, Mawlana Suhayl, who informed us that approximately 1,200 students study at the seminary.



### *Jāmi'ah Faruqiyya*

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, we were unable to visit Jāmi'ah Faruqiyya, the renowned seminary established by Shaykh Mawlana SalīmAllah Khan (d. 1438/2017 - may Allah have mercy on him). In recent years, a new campus of the seminary has been established on a vast piece of land by Shaykh SalīmAllah Khan's son, Dr. Mawlana 'Ādil Khan, who was brutally assassinated only a few months ago (may Allah grant him a high abode in paradise. *Āmīn*). A lovely local brother, Mawlana 'Ābid Siddīq (graduate of Dār al-'Ulūm Karachi), visited me on a few occasions and insisted that I visit Jāmi'ah Faruqiyya, after having spoken to the current rector, Shaykh Anas Khan (son of Dr. 'Ādil Khan). May Allah reward his efforts. *Āmīn*.





### ***Jāmi'ah Binnoriyya***

A visit to Jāmi'ah Binnoriyya also did not materialize. The seminary was established by Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Na'im, who recently passed away in June 2020 (may Allah have mercy on him). Regarded as an international educational institute, Jāmi'ah Binnoriyya has approximately 5,000 students, including many foreign students. A teacher phones me and insisted on our visit, saying it would be good to meet the foreign students studying at the seminary. However, a visit sadly did not occur. I do hope to visit it, and also Jāmi'ah Faruqiyya, in a future visit to Karachi, *in shā Allah*.



## OTHER ACTIVITIES IN KARACHI

Karachi is an extremely vibrant and cosmopolitan city, and Pakistan's premier industrial and financial centre. It is full of restaurants and places to visit for shopping. Despite this, I did not want to leave the paradise-like Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi compound and the company of our beloved shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). Our time outside of the Dār al-ʿUlūm was kept to a minimum. On one occasion, however, we visited a shopping mall called 'Lucky One' to purchase gifts for our family members and friends. It was pleasing to see a beautifully built mosque within the mall that fills up with worshippers for each congregational prayer, *Al-ḥamdu lillah*.

On the evening of our visit to Jāmiʿat al-ʿUlūm al-Islamiyya (Binnori Town Madrasa), I was invited by Shaykh Mawlana ʿAbdAllah Meman for dinner at his residence in the Gulshan Iqbal area of Karachi. The respected Mawlana is a former teacher of Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi and worked for several years as the academic secretary of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). He is renowned for compiling our honourable shaykh's public Urdu discourses, entitled *Islāhi Khutubāt*, in 25 volumes, and *Islāhi Majālis* in about 9 volumes. I built up a good relationship with him during my student days, often visiting and sitting with him in his office, which was adjacent to our respected shaykh's office. After my studies, I maintained contact with him, often sending him my letters for our shaykh (Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani), for him to present them to the shaykh. In recent years, however, we did not remain in contact much. He left his teaching post

at the Dār al-‘Ulūm some ten years ago and took up a position of teaching and management at Dār al-‘Ulūm’s Bayt al-Mukarram Mosque branch, in Gulshan Iqbal (Karachi).

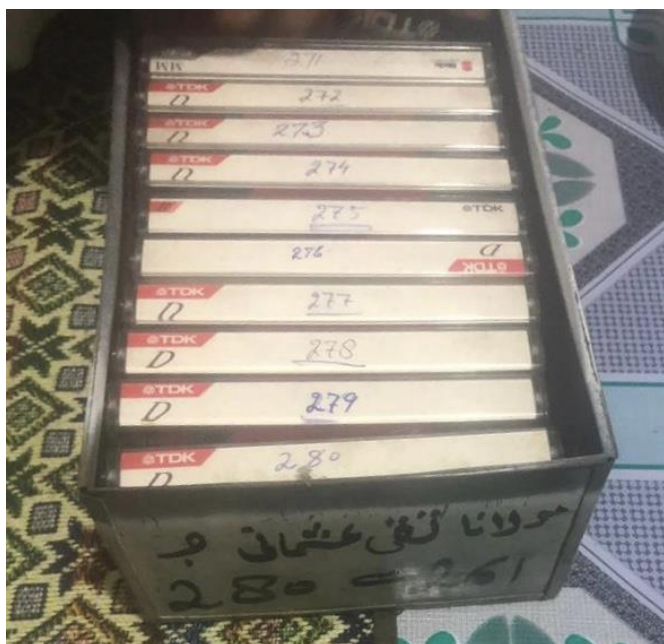
We reached Mawlana ‘AbdAllāh Meman’s house approximately an hour after ‘isha prayers. It was a pleasure meeting him once again. Various discussions ensued over dinner, such as his current activities and writings. He gifted me a few books, including the last six volumes of *Islāhi Khutubāt* and a few volumes of *Islāhi Majālis*. I was naturally elated, as I only had up to volume 19 of *Islāhi Khutubāt*. May Allah Most High reward him abundantly. *Āmīn*. He also showed us some old audio cassettes, containing the recordings of Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani’s discourses, which he used during his compilation of the *Islāhi Khutubāt*.

For many years, our shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani’s discourses were conducted at the Bayt al-Mukarram Mosque. As students, we would attend these, every Sunday after ‘asr salah. Later, however, they were moved to Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi for security and other reasons. I mentioned to Mawlana ‘AbdAllāh Meman that he is the compiler of these discourses, and given they commenced at the Bayt al-Mukarram Mosque, it is ironic that Allah decreed for him to leave his post at the Dār al-‘Ulūm, and relocate to the Bayt al-Mukarram Mosque branch. He smiled and, thereafter, remarked that he has been reading my articles in the Al-Balāgh journal, in relation to my travels with Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). He added, out of kindness and by way of encouragement, that he enjoyed reading them, saying: “Your writing style contains glimpses (*jhalak*) of the writings of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.” Naturally, I was embarrassed by his statement, but took it as a good omen. May Allah Most High accept the efforts of Mawlana ‘AbdAllāh Meman. *Āmīn*.

Another dinner invitation that we accepted was at the residence of Dr. Hanif Kamal (may Allah preserve him). Dr. Hanif is a Paediatric Infectious Diseases Consultant at South City Hospital in Karachi. He graduated from Dow Medical University in Karachi and completed postgraduate training in the United States of America. He is also a student of our shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him), in the science of spirituality (*tasawwuf/tazkiya*) and has been granted permission by the shaykh in the spiritual order. He has been running a very beneficial [Ashrafiya Blog](#) for many years, which propagates the teachings of Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thānawi and his spiritual successors –particularly, Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-Hayy ‘Ārifi (may Allah have mercy on them) and Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him), regarding *tasawwuf/tazkiya*. I first came into contact with Dr. Hanif Kamal, via email correspondence, in approximately 2006. Thereafter, we did not have any significant communication until approximately a year ago.

After performing ‘*isha* one evening, I accompanied our respected Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani to his house, to discuss an important personal matter. The shaykh then suggested that I have dinner with him. However, we had already accepted the invitation of Dr. Hanif Kamal. I mentioned it to our honourable shaykh, and he happily granted permission to attend Dr. Hanif's invitation. Accordingly, we went to the residence of Dr. Hanif in the city of Karachi. He welcomed us warmly. We had met him a day earlier during his visit to Dār al-‘Ulūm. A talented student of Dār al-‘Ulūm's *fatwa* specialization (*takhassus*) programme, Mawlana Fa'iq of Islamabad, and a good friend from Lahore, with whom I have been in communication for a while, Dr. Talha, also joined us. The dinner was delicious and our discussions beneficial. May Allah reward Dr. Hanif Kamal for his wonderful hospitality, bless him in all his endeavours and grant him the good of this life and the next. *Āmīn*.





## VISIT TO MULTAN

Prior to travelling to Pakistan, I made an intention to include, in the visit, the Punjab cities of Lahore, Multan and Islamabad. However, once I reached Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi and experienced the tranquil and spiritually uplifting company of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him), I did not want to go elsewhere. I mentioned this to our honourable shaykh, but he suggested that I visit the aforementioned cities – especially, given the fact that I have not previously visited those cities. He added that the cities of Lahore and Multan contain historical monuments, which I should consider visiting. He further remarked that they are also the homes of some of our great predecessors (*akābir*) and well-known Islamic institutions/seminaries.

In compliance with his encouragement, we decided to travel (although, we did not visit Islamabad due to time constraints). However, I mentioned to him, out of sentiment and my love for him, that one of my main intentions of visiting Lahore would be to visit a seminary (Jāmi‘ah Ashrafiyya) where he was a student for a short period of time (details to follow). My decision to travel was further made easy by the fact that the principal of the famous *Khayr al-Madāris* seminary in Multan, Shaykh Qari Muhammad Hanif Jalandhari, was on a visit to Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. Upon meeting him, he insisted that we visit Multan, and had our flight tickets booked from Karachi to Multan.

### ***Wifāq al-Madāris al-Arabiyya***

We took an early evening PIA flight from Karachi to Multan on Wednesday 23 December 2020. We were received at the airport by some staff of the Wifāq Al-Madāris Al-Arabiyya head office. The Wifāq is a madrasa educational board and federation of Islamic Seminaries in Pakistan that was founded in 1959 by erudite scholars such as Mawlana Shams al-Haq Afghani (d. 1403/1983), Mawlana Khayr Muhammad Jalandhari and Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Binnori (may Allah have mercy on them). Currently, over 21,000 madrasas across Pakistan are affiliated with the federation. The functions of the Wifāq include registration of seminaries, creation of syllabus, checking standard of education, arrangement of examination and issuance of degrees. Each year, over 200,000 male and female students from across Pakistan take part in examinations simultaneously. Examination papers are prepared by the Wifāq head office and sent to the various seminaries, and then returned to be marked. The system is sophisticated and very impressive. Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-Razzaq Iskandar (rector of Jāmi‘at al-‘Ulūm al-Islamiyya, Binnori Town) is the current president of the Wifāq, while Shaykh Qari Muhammad Hanif Jalandhari is its general secretary.

Shaykh Muhammad Hanif Jalandhari had arranged for us to stay the night at the Wifāq head office (in Multan). We had dinner with two office staff members, Mawlana ‘Abd al-Majid and Mawlana Maymūn, who explained the role and operational system of the Wifāq to us. The next morning, after *fajr* and breakfast, they gave us a tour of the head office. This included visiting the room in which current examination papers and answer sheets are stored, the room in which previous examination papers are archived, the printing press, the accountancy office, the general administration office and more. The staff in each of these rooms/offices were busy in their work. May Allah accept the work of the Wifāq and grant it further success. *Āmīn*.





### **Sayyid ‘Aṭā’Allah Shah Bukhari and his sons**

We departed from the Wifāq al-Madāris headquarters and headed towards a small cemetery, in central Multan, where the great scholar, Shaykh Mawlana Sayyid ‘Aṭā’Allah Shah Bukhari (d. 1381/1961), and his family members, are buried (may Allah have mercy on them). Sayyid ‘Aṭā’Allah Shah Bukhari was an extraordinarily gifted orator, poet and passionate freedom fighter, whose name I have been hearing since my childhood. He worked tirelessly in freeing India from British rule. He spent much of his later life serving the cause of *khatm al-nubuwwa* (finality of prophethood) and countering the Qādiyāni/Ahmadiyya movement. Our honourable shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, once mentioned that Sayyid ‘Aṭā’Allah Shah Bukhari held him in his lap, when he was a child.

We entered the cemetery and offered *salām* and recited *al-Fatiha* and other *surahs* by the graves of Sayyid ‘Aṭā’Allah Shah Bukhari, his wife, and his sons, who were also great scholars – namely: Sayyid Abu Dhar ‘Aṭā’ al-Mun’im Shah Bukhari (d. 1416/1995), Sayyid ‘Aṭā’ al-Muhsin Shah Bukhari (d. 1420/1999) and Sayyid ‘Aṭā’ al-Mu’min Shah Bukhari (d. 1439/2018). May Allah Most High have mercy on all of them and grant them a high abode in the hereafter. *Āmīn*. The fourth and surviving son, Sayyid ‘Aṭā’ al-Muhaymin Shah Bukhari, is approximately 90 years of age, bedridden and weak (may Allah grant him wellbeing). We wished to visit him, but, due to his poor health, it was not possible.<sup>2</sup>

From the cemetery, we made our way to a nearby madrasa, known as Dār Banu Hashim or Bukhari Academy, run by the Bukhari family. We briefly toured the small madrasa and visited a library consisting mainly

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, he recently passed away to the mercy of Allah on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. May Allah have mercy on him and grant him entry to Paradise. *Āmīn*.

of books relating to Sayyid ‘Aṭā’ Allah Shah Bukhari. We met Sayyid ‘Aṭā’ Allah Shah Bukhari’s grandson (daughter’s son), who gifted us a copy of a book written by his mother, entitled *Sayyidi wa Abī* (My Master and My Father). It was my first experience of coming across a biography written by a female scholar of her esteemed father. The biography includes letters of Sayyid ‘Aṭā’ Allah Shah Bukhari, written from prison, to his daughter. May Allah have mercy on both of them. *Āmīn*.





### ***Khatm al-Nubuwwa Headquarters***

Our next destination was the head office of the international organization for the protection of *khatm al-nubuwwa* (finality of prophethood), known as ‘Ālami Majlis Tahaffuz Khatm Nubuwwa. The organization was formed in 1949 by the aforementioned Shaykh Sayyid ‘Aṭā’Allah Shah Bukhari, who was elected its first emir, and other scholars. Subsequent emirs included Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Binnori and Shaykh Mawlana Khawaja Khan Muhammad (may Allah have mercy on them all). The current head of the organization is Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-Razzaq Iskander, the rector of Jāmi‘at al-‘Ulūm al-Islamiyya in Binnori Town.

The organization has been working for the cause of safeguarding the sanctity and finality of prophethood, and countering the repudiators of this belief. It has published many books and journals over the years and continues to distribute free literature in multiple languages. For many years, it arranged conferences in the UK, with scholars such as Mawlana Khawaja Khan Muhammad and Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Ludhyānwi (may Allah have mercy on them) traveling from Pakistan to attend the conferences.

We briefly visited the organization’s head office and met a very senior scholar, Shaykh Mawlana Allah Wasāya (may Allah preserve him). I had met the Mawlana many times in my childhood and teens, during his visits to the UK. It was a pleasure to sit with him, enjoy his hospitality and even get a tour of the premises. He showed us the library containing old and new works on the topic of *khatm al-nubuwwa*. May Allah accept the efforts of the organization and all those working for this great cause of Islam. *Āmīn*.



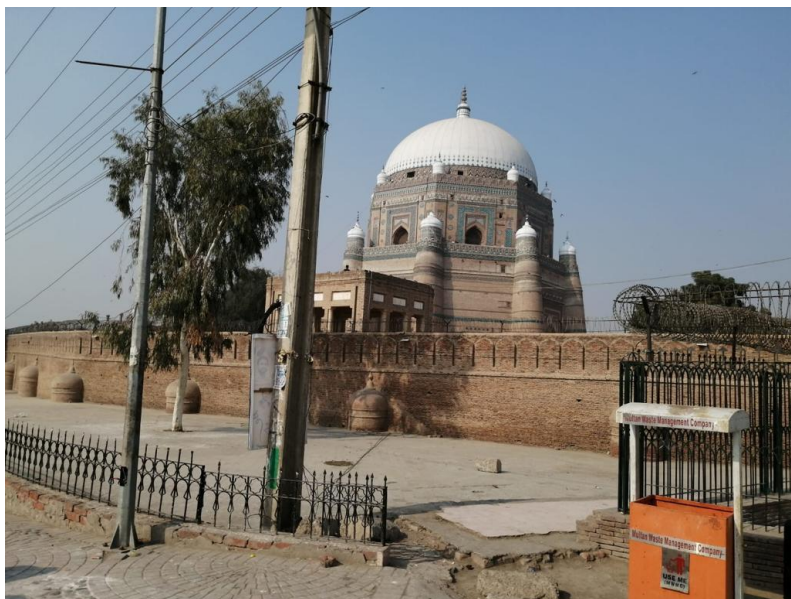




### ***Tour of Multan City***

Multan is a historic city and a major cultural and economic centre of southern Punjab. There is much to see in the city, but unfortunately, due to time constraints, our tour was very brief. Among the monuments and places of interest we visited was the Kohnah Fort (*qil'a*) – a military installation built between 800 and 1000 BC. Located near it, are the mausoleums of Bahā al-Din Zakariyya and Shah Rukn 'Ālam. The lofty domes of these mausoleums are visible from a distance and dominate the Multan skyline. Baha al-Din Zakariyya and Shah Rukn 'Ālam are said to have brought Islam to this part of the world – Allah knows best. We passed by a hill with gates on either side. Our host informed us that when Muhammad ibn Qasim conquered this area, his army entered

from one side of the hill and marched down to the other side. In their remembrance, two gates were erected.







### *Jāmi'ah Khayr al-Madāris*

It was my long term desire to visit the world-renowned Jāmi'ah Khayr al-Madāris seminary. As mentioned previously, the seminary was established by the late Mawlana Khayr Muhammad Jalandhari (d. 1390/1970), upon the instruction of his shaykh, Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thānawi (may Allah have mercy on them both). Originally founded in the Indian city of Jalandhar in 1931, the seminary moved to its current Multan location in 1947, after partition and

Mawlana Khayr Muhammad's subsequent migration to Pakistan. After the passing of Mawlana Khayr Muhammad Jalandhari, his son, Mawlana Muhammad Sharif Jalandhari (d. 1401/1981), became the principal of the seminary. He passed away in Makkah, whilst on an 'umra trip, at the age of 63 (may Allah have mercy on them both). His one and only son, Mawlana Qari Muhammad Hanif Jalandhari, took the reins of the seminary whilst only in his early twenties and having graduated a year earlier.

As mentioned, Mawlana Qari Muhammad Hanif Jalandhari was the main instigator behind our visit to Multan. We arrived at Jāmi'ah Khayr al-Madāris and met him at his office. He welcomed us with his usual warm and welcoming personality. He explained that there are 300 students at the main campus, and 5,000 male and female students, if all the various branches are included. After performing *zuhr salah* in the main mosque, Mawlana Hanif gave us a brief tour of the seminary. The main mosque is currently undergoing major renovation and expansion, with plans to enhance it significantly. May Allah bring the work to completion. *Āmīn*. We also visited the various classrooms, the beautiful Dār al-Qur'an building, comprising a sliding roof, and the cemetery. We offered *salām* and recited at the grave of Mawlana Khayr Muhammad Jalandhari and others buried within the cemetery (may Allah have mercy on them all). After lunch, we bid farewell to Mawlana Qari Muhammad Hanif and other teachers and staff of Jāmi'ah Khayr al-Madāris, and headed for the city of Lahore.







## VISIT TO LAHORE

We made our way from Multan to Lahore, Pakistan's second largest city after Karachi, and reached at around 8pm at the residence of my host and dear friend, Shaykh Mu'adh Ashraf Usmani. Shaykh Mu'adh is a bright and capable young scholar, who initially studied at Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya in Lahore and then completed his final year of the 'ālimiyya course, as well as the *fatwa* specialisation programme (*takhassus*), at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. He also has an MPhil in Islamic banking and finance. He is the grandson of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Rafi' Usmani (may Allah protect him), and great grandson of Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on him) from both his paternal and maternal side. His mother is the daughter of Mufti Muhammad Rafi' Usmani, while his father, brother Muhammad Hashim, is the son of Mufti Muhammad Shafi's daughter (elder sister of Mufti Muhammad Rafi' Usmani and Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani). Currently, Shaykh Mu'adh is a teacher and member of Dār al-Iftā' at Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya. He is actively engaged in various projects with various bodies, such as the [Centre for Halal Assurance](#) (a globally recognized halal certification body) and Meezan Bank.

I have known Shaykh Mu'adh for approximately 3-4 years, with regular communication. When I expressed my desire to visit Lahore, he insisted upon hosting me and offered to take me around, adding that I should stay in Lahore for 3-4 days. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, we could only spend a day in Lahore. He stayed with us, throughout our stay. I cannot thank him and his family enough for their love and



wonderful hospitality. May Allah reward them in abundance and grant them the good of this life and the hereafter. *Āmīn*.

Dinner was arranged at the popular Bundu Khan restaurant in the company of Shaykh Mu’adh, his father and brothers. The meal was very much enjoyed, as well as the company and the various light-hearted discussions. Shaykh Mu’adh mentioned that during his recent visit to Karachi, while sitting in the company of Shaykh al-Islam Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him), our beloved shaykh said regarding me, “He has almost memorised all my books.” Without doubt, I do not deserve such accolade from our honourable shaykh, but it reflects his kindness, compassion and amazing knack of encouraging his juniors/students. In this regard, it would be appropriate to just quote what Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Binnori said about himself in relation to his beloved teacher, Imam Anwar Shah Kashmīri, (without attempting to make any sort of comparison between myself and Shaykh Yusuf Binnori). He stated, “Apparently, from amongst the students of Hadhrat [Imam Anwar] Shah saheb, I have [probably] been able to gain the least benefit from him [due to my shortcomings], but my extreme love for my shaykh had developed within me complete congeniality (*munasaba*) with his knowledge.” May Allah’s mercy be on both scholars and may He be pleased with them. *Āmīn*.

I stayed the night at Shaykh Mu’adh’s residence, while my colleague decided to stay at the residence of one of his student days’ friends, Shaykh Mushāhid ‘Ali. Of Bangladeshi origin, Shaykh Mushāhid is a student and disciple of Mufti Muhammad Rafi‘ Usmani (may Allah protect him). He is a mufti at an Islamic academy in Lahore and lectures on hadith at another seminary. He also accompanied us throughout our day in Lahore and drove us to the airport. May Allah reward him. *Āmīn*.

## ***Badshāhi Mosque***

The next morning (Friday 25<sup>th</sup> December), after *fajr* and breakfast, we first visited the famous and iconic Badshāhi Mosque, located adjacent to the Lahore Fort. The mosque was commissioned by the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb Alamghīr, in 1671, with construction lasting two years until 1673. The mosque is an important example of Mughal architecture, with an exterior that is decorated with carved red sandstone and marble inlay. It remains the largest mosque of the Mughal-era and currently is the second largest mosque in Pakistan. After the fall of the Mughal Empire, the mosque was used as a garrison by the Sikh and British Empires. It was later restored to its original function, *Al-ḥamdu lillah*.

Since it was Friday, we performed *jumu'a* prayers at the mosque. Thereafter, we toured the mosque and walked around the massive and impressive courtyard. Near the entrance of the mosque lies the tomb of the famous poet, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1357/1938), who championed the cause of the creation of Pakistan. We also viewed the Minār Pakistan – a tower that reflects a blend of Mughal and modern architecture, and considered a national monument. There are beautiful gardens within the vicinity, where many families enjoy picnics and socialize.







## Royal Fort

After *jumu'a salah*, we visited the Royal Fort (*shahi qil'a*), adjacent to the Badshāhi Mosque. The fort was almost entirely rebuilt during the height of the Mughal Empire and reign of Emperor Akbar. The fort's grand and iconic Alamghīri Gate was constructed by the last of the Mughal Emperors, Aurangzeb, and faces the Badshāhi Mosque. We spent about two hours touring the fort, witnessing Mughal history, old manuscripts, royal baths, a small mosque built inside the fort, and much more.





### *Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya Lahore*

Along with Jāmi'ah Khayr al-Madāris of Multan, another religious seminary/madrassa that I always wanted to visit in Punjab is the Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya in Lahore. The seminary was founded by Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Hasan Amritsari (d. 1380/1961) in 1947, a month after the creation of Pakistan, upon the instruction of his shaykh, Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thānawi (may Allah have mercy on them both). Mufti Muhammad Hasan Amritsari was a student and disciple of Hakīm al-Umma Mawlana Thānawi and, thus, named the seminary after him. (Incidentally, four major seminaries in Pakistan were established by students of Hakīm al-Umma, namely: Jāmi'ah Dār al-ʿUlūm in Karachi by Mufti Muhammad Shafīʿ, Jāmi'at al-ʿUlūm al-Islamiyya in Binnori Town, Karachi, by Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Binnori, Jāmi'ah Khayr al-

Madāris in Multan by Mawlana Khayr Muhammad Jalandhari, and Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya in Lahore by Mufti Muhammad Hasan Amritsari. May Allah be pleased with all of them. *Āmīn*).

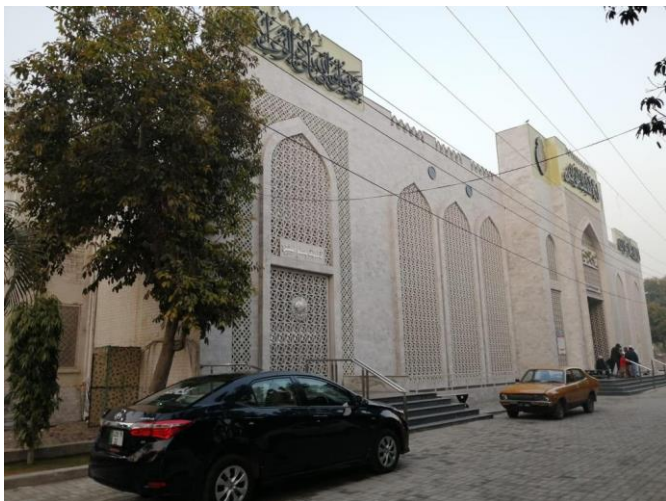
Mufti Muhammad Hasan was originally from Amritsar in India. He migrated to Lahore after partition. He was a very saintly scholar, such that Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him) states, “In terms of scholarship (*‘ilm*) and piety, along with my father, I was most influenced by Mufti Muhammad Hasan (may Allah have mercy on him). A special feeling of spiritual light (*nūr*) was sensed in his gatherings. When I was approximately 12 or 13, I contemplated giving him the pledge (*bay’a*) of *tasawwuf/tazkiya* – whenever I thought about giving the *bay’a*, he would come to my mind. He was also very knowledgeable. Once, during a month-long visit to Lahore with my mother, I studied at Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya. One of our teachers had to take leave, so we requested Mufti Muhammad Hasan (may Allah have mercy on him) to find us an alternative teacher, but he put himself forward. Thus, he taught me and a few of my class-fellows two books on Arabic grammar and logic (*Sharh Jāmi* and *Sharh Tahdhib*). Despite not having taught these books for many years, his knowledge of grammar and logic was astonishing.” (As mentioned previously, I highlighted this point to our honourable shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, when discussing the visit to Lahore).

After the passing of Mufti Muhammad Hasan in 1961, his eldest son, Shaykh Mawlana Muhammad UbaydAllah was appointed the principle of Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya. He served the seminary first as its teacher and then as principal for 55 years, introducing modern trends of education. He passed away in 2016 at the age of 95 (he was born in 1921 in Amritsar - may Allah have mercy on him). After his passing, his younger brother, Shaykh Mawlana Fadl al-Rahīm Ashrafi (may Allah preserve him) became the principle.

Since its establishment, thousands of scholars have graduated from Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya and gone onto spread the beacon of knowledge to people all over the world. Great luminaries taught at the Jāmi'ah, such as Shaykh Mawlana Idrīs Kāndahlawi (d. 1394/1974) and Shaykh Musa Rūḥānī Bāzi (d. 1419/1998). Today, the main campus comprises a mosque, a large administrative and teaching complex, two boarding houses (one for local students and one for foreign students), a hospital, and residences for faculty students and employees. The seminary has ten other branches in Lahore and serves around 3,000 students in total.

We reached Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya at around 'aṣr time, after which a marriage ceremony (*nikah*) was conducted in the mosque by the current principal, Shaykh Mawlana Fadl al-Rahīm. The respected shaykh is a regular visitor to the UK and close associate of our shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani. It was an honour to meet him briefly. He mentioned that he has currently given his *tasawwuf/tazkiya* pledge at the hands of Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect them both). Thereafter, we toured the various areas of the seminary. The students were on vacation – hence, we were unable to meet them or the teachers. May Allah protect this historic seminary and grant it further success in spreading the teachings of Allah and His Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him). *Āmīn*.

From Jāmi'ah Ashrafiyya, we headed straight to the airport for our 7pm flight back to Karachi. After spending two whirlwind days in Multan and Lahore, it was great to be back [home] at Dār al-'Ulūm Karachi and spend the last few days there, before our return to the UK.



## FINAL MEETING AND ADVICE

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> December, the final day of 2020, was our final day in Pakistan. Naturally, we felt a sense of sadness, as our two-week stay in Pakistan – in particular, Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi – was coming to an end. We were scheduled to depart for the airport after midnight, in order to take the 4am flight back to the UK. After *maghrib salah*, our beloved shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him) called me on my phone, instructing me and my colleague to visit him at his residence. He added that he initially intended to invite us for dinner after ‘*isha*, but had to unexpectedly attend an invitation outside Dār al-‘Ulūm with his family.

Upon reaching his house, he gave us the following short farewell advice (*nasīha*):

“I advise you to manage your time properly and plan a daily timetable for yourselves. In preparing a daily schedule, do take into consideration rest, spending time with family and other duties. In terms of daily Qur’an recitation, *adhkār*, etc., there is nothing wrong with keeping it brief, so that it is manageable. Fixing a small amount and maintaining it is better than intending to recite a lot and not being able to sustain it. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, ‘The best deeds are those done regularly, even if they be few’ and ‘Make your religion sincere, even less deeds will be sufficient for you.’

Once a daily timetable is planned, ensure to maintain it at all cost – unless, there is a valid excuse, such as illness or some other emergency.

However, if one does not feel like executing a particular task, out of laziness and because the body and mind is not present, then one must force oneself in executing it. There is no other remedy. Make a resolve to force yourself to sit for the task at hand, at all cost. Until one does this, one cannot achieve success – especially, in the path of *tasawwuf/tazkiya*.

By planning a daily timetable, tasks and duties will be fulfilled, and one will be granted blessings (*baraka*). If, for some reason, one is unable to complete a particular task on a particular day, ensure to complete it before retiring to bed.”

With the above advice, our beloved shaykh bid us farewell. He gave us a few parting gifts and apologized for giving them at such a late time. He added that he always feels unsure about giving gifts just prior to someone’s departure, since it may burden them. This is the way of the great men of Allah, in that they think about the convenience of others at every juncture of life and at every interaction with others. May Allah Most High allow us to follow in their footsteps. *Āmīn*. In response, I remarked that there is no burden. Rather, it is an honour to receive the gifts from him, even if he gave them to us at the airport. He then recited the *sunna du‘ā’* of bidding farewell and, with much sadness, we greeted him and departed.

Two weeks had flown by and it was now time for us to return to the UK. May Allah Most High grant us the benefits of this trip, remove the pandemic from our midst, grant us all wellbeing, enable us to travel to the two sacred sanctuaries (*Haramayn*) and allow us to return to Karachi soon. May He grant our dear and beloved shaykh, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, wellbeing, strength and the goodness of this life and the next. *Āmīn*.



*Two Weeks in Pakistan* is a captivating and descriptive travelogue of three Pakistani cities: Karachi, Lahore and Multan. The focus is on the various Islamic seminaries (*madrasas*) and great scholars (*ʿulamā*) and shuyūkh, both past and present. The majority of the discussion surrounds the world-renowned and prestigious seat of Islamic learning, Jāmiʿah Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi, and the honourable Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (may Allah protect him). The travelogue is a must read for anyone – in particular, students of sacred knowledge (*tullab al-ʿilm*) – seeking to learn about the major and magnificent religious institutions in Pakistan and those great souls from whom they take their magnificence.

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*“Shaykh Muhammad ibn Adam takes the reader with him on the journey, intriguing and fascinating him at every step. With his sharp attention to the minutest of detail, he provides a very detailed and insightful account of our travels.”*

– SHAYKH BADR AL-ISLAM, Fig & Olive Press (Northampton, UK)